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Asian Highlands Perspectives



Volume 1

ASIAN HIGHLANDS PERSPECTIVES

VOLUME 1

Edited by

Charles Kevin Stuart

Gerald Roche

Tshe dbang rdo rje རྩ་དབང་རྡོ་རྗེ། 才项多杰

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Front Cover: Photo by Gangs lha. Prayer wheels being turned. Dzamthang County, Rnga ba Tibetan and Qiang 羌 Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan 四川 Province.

Back Cover: Photo by Wen Xiangcheng 文祥呈 . Shaguojiang 杀虢将 'Tiger Slaying General' dance performed during the annual Nadun festival. Longbu 龙卜 Village, Qianhe 前河 Township, Minhe 民和 Hui 回 and Tu 土 Autonomous County, Qinghai 青海 Province.

FROM THE EDITORS

Asian Highlands Perspectives welcomes submissions that allow us to better hear and understand voices from the highlands of Asia relating their experiences—what they mean and how they are understood—all with a view to enriching our knowledge of this vast area. We hope to feature autobiographical accounts and studies of songs, jokes, tongue twisters, weddings, divorce, funerals, 'dirty' stories and songs, love songs, rituals of romance, illness, medicine, healing, clothing, music, rites of passage, orations, gender, herding techniques, agricultural practices, trading, flora and fauna, the annual cycle of work in rural communities, 'development', language, religion, conflict, architecture, education, apprenticeships, art, and everything else that informs us.

Prospective authors are welcome to use theory to interpret what they report, however, the editors are particularly interested in careful, detailed, contextualized descriptions revealing local meanings of what is being described, and how this connects with relevant publications. While anyone may make submissions, it is especially hoped that local scholars who lack access to educational systems emphasizing theory and analysis will contribute. All submissions are peer reviewed. Published authors will receive PDF versions of their published work.

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AMDO TIBETAN TONGUE TWISTERS

Blo rtan rdo rje (University of Oslo), Charles Kevin Stuart (Independent Scholar), and Gerald Roche (Griffith University/ Qinghai Normal University)

ABSTRACT

Tibetan tongue twisters are a distinctive and significant part of Tibetan oral folk literature. They are made up of words and phrases related to what people see and experience in daily life. These words are strung together and are difficult to articulate rapidly and fluently, often because of a succession of questions and/ or similar consonantal sounds. This article sheds light on this poorly studied, vanishing, aspect of Tibetan tradition by focusing on tongue twisters that were once popular in Pha bzhi (Hayu 哈玉), a subdivision of Skya rgya (Jiajia 贾加) Administrative Village, Skya rgya Township, Gcan tsha (Jianzha 尖扎) County, Rma lho (Huangnan 黄南) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai 青海) Province, PR China.

KEY WORDS

Tibetan tongue twisters, Tibetan language, oral tradition, Pha bzhi

INTRODUCTION

Tibetan tongue twisters as a living, generationally transmitted tradition, are on the verge of extinction. The common use of tongue twisters among many ordinary Tibetans swiftly declined in the 1980s as China's rapid modernization began powerfully affecting rural Tibetan areas in the form of household ownership of televisions, radios, and VCD/ DVD machines. Subsequently, these unique folklore forms that had been passed down through many generations and expressed in very specific, local forms lost their allure in just a decade and now have either vanished, or soon will, in most Tibetan areas of China.

An internet Google search done 18 May 2007 for 'Tibetan tongue twister' obtained three hits, all of which alluded to the same phrase—'Tibetan tongue twister'—to mean irrelevant and obscure information.¹ While this search was done in English, we were unable to find a single example of a published Tibetan tongue twister. Sa gong dbang 'dus (2003), Gzungs 'bum thar (2004), Rgyang 'khor tshe phun (2004), Sgang rgyal mtshan tshe ring (2002), and Zla ba tshe ring and Bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal (2004) are works providing examples and discussion of scores of folk traditions, but do not mention Tibetan tongue twisters.

¹ "Eager to impress, I decided to try and master a few Swedish phrases before departing for the northern city of Umeå (which I pronounced you-me-a). However, a quick search of the high street book stores produced nothing.

"If I had wanted to learn 'Business Swahili for Beginners', or perhaps get to grips with Tibetan Tongue Twisters, I'd have been in luck. Swedish, at least in the little corner of England I occupied, had apparently ceased to exist. I'd have to dig deeper." (<http://forum.clan00.de/archive/index.php/t-3111.html>) accessed 18 May 2007.

English-language studies on Tibetan oral traditions often suffer from one of two assumptions. One is that they conflate Tibetan culture with Tibetan Buddhism. An example of this is the work of Klein (1994, 2003) who discusses Tibetan orality only within the institutional religious context (see Tokaskar-Bakir 2000 for an instance of Tibetan religious orality in non-institutional contexts). This inability to disentangle Tibetan Buddhism from Tibetan culture is symptomatic of how Westerners generally view Tibet, and has been discussed at length elsewhere (e.g., Bishop 2001). A second assumption that authors typically make is to conflate oral traditions with performance traditions when discussing oral traditions in Tibetan areas. The whole corpus of 'Gesar studies' falls into this category (e.g., Zhambei Gyaltsho 2001, Yang 2001, Karmay 1993, Kornman 2005). The impression given by such works is that Tibetan oral traditions are the sole preserve of monks and performers, and not part of the fabric of people's daily lives.

Michael Aris' (1987) work on alternative oral literature in Bhutan challenges this impression by giving two examples of non-religious oral traditions situated in the gray area between performance and non-performance traditions. Goldstein (1982) has also given an example of a Tibetan oral tradition that is neither religious nor a specialist performance genre. By far the best treatment of orality in a Tibetan context, however, is Anton-Luca (2002) who contextualizes Amdo folk song practices in terms of the high value placed on the spoken word in northeast Tibet. It is within this context of a pervasive, vernacular, and much-valued orality that the present work should be read for it preserves a record of local tongue twisters that typify a local community in Amdo; contextualizes their use by reporting certain tongue twisters that were at one time energetically recited in Pha bzhi; and more specifically, describes and illustrates how people learned tongue twisters,

how they were told, why they were entertaining, and why they improved fluency in Tibetan and taught knowledge of the natural world.

The first author learned tongue twisters mostly from herders in the mountains where he spent eight years of his childhood and began writing this article on the basis of the tongue twisters that he could remember. Then in 2004, he interviewed village elders who retained memory of tongue twisters and who provided additional examples.

CONSULTANTS

Lcags mo rgyal (1915-2007) was illiterate. She lived her life in the Skya rgya Mountains herding yaks after divorcing her husband in 1945. She retired from herding in 2005 and lived the remainder of her life at a cousin's home in Pha bzhi. When Blo rtan rdo rje interviewed her in 2005, she had forgotten many tongue twisters. She had never traveled outside the local area. She was a great storyteller and inspired narrator of the Gesar epic. She recounted folklore vividly. She laughed and cried, and her voice was gentle and then coarse at appropriate times. She provided Tongue Twister Ten—*a bcu cha bcu*, and Tongue Twister Thirteen—*a the the brgyad*.

Rdo rje bkra shis (b. 1940) taught Blo rtan rdo rje tongue twisters when Blo rtan rdo rje was a child. He has some competency in reading Tibetan; he knows no Chinese. Blo rtan rdo rje interviewed him in the summer of 2005 while he was going to the mountains to herd. He provided Tongue Twister Five—*glang ngu dkar dmar gnyis* and Tongue Twister Twelve—*a mtshar mtshar dgu*.

Mgon po rgya mtsho (b. 1936) is a tailor who travels in Amdo Tibetan areas. He makes Tibetan robes and Tibetan style jackets, shirts, winter coats, and so on. He provided Tongue Twister Fourteen—*med la med dgu* and Tongue Twister Fifteen—*chags la chags dgu*.

INTRODUCTION TO PHA BZHI

Pha bzhi Village is situated ten kilometers south of the nearest town, Gdong sna² Town (*zhen* 镇). In 2008 Gdong sna, twenty-three kilometers northeast of Gcan tsha County Town, had a predominantly Muslim (Hui 回)³ population. Pha bzhi literally translates as 'father-four' because local residents trace their ancestry to four Tibetan soldiers who were posted from Central Tibet by the Tibetan government during the Thu bhod⁴ Kingdom. When Lha lung dpal rdor assassinated the last Tibetan king, Glang dar ma,⁵ in 845

² Gdong sna = Kangyang 康 杨. According to local elders, Gdong sna was called *chu*, meaning 'water', by locals until the army of the local warlord, Ma Bufang 马步芳 (1902-1973), invaded. This name was likely related to the Yellow River (Rma chu, Huanghe 黄河) that flows through the area. Rgya skor and Skar ma thang villages were socially and religiously connected until the 1950s, when they were separated.

³ 'He he' (Huihui 回回) is a term locals use to refer to people who wear white skull-caps or black veils, practice Islam, and reside along the Yellow River in today's Kangyang Town. Elderly Muslims here speak perfect Tibetan. Local Tibetans call them 'Rgya he' which literally means 'Chinese Hui'.

⁴ Thu bhod = Tubo 吐蕃.

⁵ Usually written 'Langdarma', he was the brother of the great Dharma king, Ral pa can, and the persecutor of the

A.D., this spelled the collapse of the Thu bod Kingdom. The four soldiers mentioned above lived the remainder of their lives in the local area and, in time, their offspring grew in population. Today, Pha bzhi consists of thirty-nine households (346 residents), all of whom are Tibetan. Pha bzhi is one of Skya rgya Administrative Village's four subdivisions; Rog ma, Bar tsig, and Rkyang tse are the other three.

Local residents believe in the teachings of all Tibetan Buddhist sects, although Gelukpa⁶ is the most important. There are no local Bon devotees. Pha bzhi inhabitants venerate A myes Srin po, an important local mountain deity, A myes Dam chen of the Nyingma Lineage, and A myes Yul lha. They frequently consult the three deities just mentioned and regularly offer them *bsang*⁷ in order to gain merit for their families.

Most residents farm and have a few head of livestock. Each family raises swine that are butchered in winter. Feeding swine is women's labor. If a family does not raise pigs, the housewife is considered lazy. Residents typically live in flat-mud-roofed one-story structures made of wood and adobe bricks, built within a rectangular adobe-

Sangha in central Tibet in the course of his five-year reign, during which he attempted to eradicate Buddhism in Tibet.

⁶ Dge lugs pa = Gelupai 格鲁派 and Huangjiao 黄教 (Yellow Sect), founded by Tsong kha pa (1357-1419), the great Tibetan Buddhist reformer. It is one of the four major Tibetan Buddhist traditions. The establishment of Ganden (Dga' ldan) Monastery in 1409 by Tsong kha pa marked the actual foundation of the Dge lugs pa tradition. Since the mid seventeenth century, Dge lugs pa has been the dominant Tibetan religious-political power.

⁷ *Bsang* is incense consisting of juniper branches and leaves. Parched barley flour, fruit, bread, candies, and liquor may also be added and burnt with the juniper.

wall compound. In recent years, certain financially well-off residents have built large wood houses with big courtyard gates featuring exquisitely carved dragons, lions, birds, and flowers, along with colorful paintings. Homes prominently display bowls, basins, kettles, thermoses, dishes, and mirrors as decorations.

Younger people respect older people and women respect men. It is considered improper for women to sit cross-legged or with their buttocks touching the ground, especially when men are present. Drinking and smoking are taboo for women. Additionally, women guard against being labeled chatty and impulsive.

Older residents wear robes made of wool or lambskin and goatskin. In 2008, western style suits, jackets, and jeans were popular. Residents born later than about 1965 had stopped wearing traditional costumes, except on such special occasions as the New Year period and during village festivals.

Commonly, men and women between the ages of seventeen and forty years leave the village to work. Traditionally, men earned money for family expenses, however, women also began to leave the home to work at temporary, salaried jobs beginning in 2005. Women leaving the home puts added strain on the elderly who are left with the responsibility of caring for young children and doing domestic chores. Nevertheless, living conditions in 2008 in terms of clothing, food, housing, house furnishings, and access to medical care were better than ever before. After planting fields in mid-spring, women leave with men to work in Mgo log,⁸ Yul shul,⁹ and Mtsho byang¹⁰ Tibetan autonomous prefectures, and other herding areas in Qinghai

⁸ Mgo log = Guoluo 果洛.

⁹ Yul shul = Yushu 玉树.

¹⁰ Mtsho byang = Haibei 海北.

to collect caterpillar fungus¹¹ and/ or build animal enclosures for herdsman. Only old people and young children remain in the village. In autumn, adult villagers return for the annual harvest.

The availability of pesticides has replaced the need for labor-intensive weeding that was historically done by women. The harvest is usually completed in about a month. Afterwards, both men and women again leave to do road work and travel to Zi ling¹² City to do construction work. They earned an average of around thirty RMB 人民币 per day in 2008.



Blo rtan rdo rje writes:

The scenic So zis Mountain stood strikingly,
cradling some courteous herders. Two transparent
streams trickled ceaselessly, resembling an endless
*kha btags*¹³ hanging from around A myes So zis's¹⁴

¹¹ *Dbyar rtswa dgun 'bu* = *dongchong xiacao* 冬虫夏草 = *Cordyceps sinensis*, the result of a parasitic relationship between a fungus *Cordyceps* and the larva of the ghost moth (several *Thitarodes* species) that live in high altitude areas in China (the Tibet Autonomous Region, Qinghai, western Sichuan, southwest Gansu, northwest Yunnan) and in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. The fungus invades the larva, kills it and grows a fruiting body out of its head in spring. It is used in traditional Tibetan and Chinese medicines.

¹² Zi ling = Xining 西宁.

¹³ Frequently written *khatag*, it is a strip of silk indicating auspiciousness when offered to people.

¹⁴ The mountain deity venerated by herders residing in the So zis Mountains is A myes So zis, who protects their livestock. Herders believe A myes So zis is visible and

broad shoulders; thick trees harbored thousands of wild animals that lived in great fear of Ma Fumin,¹⁵ a merciless Muslim hunter.

Pondering my childhood in the So zis Mountains, my mind strides back among their peaks, where I spent much of my childhood and learned such important and meaningful things as tongue twisters.

The So zis Mountains lie seven hours on foot from Pha bzhi. In the mid-1980s, I was just old enough to be afraid of doing things that might hurt me. Grandmother came home one day and wanted to take me into the mountains where she herded our yaks and goats. My parents thought that it would be an additional burden for her to care for me because she already had many herding chores, and refused. Grandmother knew that I liked birds and caught my interest by saying that there were many beautiful birds to play with and much milk to drink in the

helpful only to those who regularly pray and offer sacrifices to him. A local account relates that A myes So zis paid a nocturnal visit to A myes Brag dkar's (White Mountain God) wife and was subsequently caught by A myes Brag dkar and subdued. A large valley divides these two mountains. In 2008, A myes Brag dkar belonged to Lowa Village in Mtsho drug (Cuozhou 措周) Township and A myes So zis belonged to Skya rgya (Jiajia 贾加) Township.

¹⁵ Ma Fumin 马富民 was a hunter who lived in the So zis Mountains and hunted musk deer for their musk; wild cattle for their meat; wild felines (*rtsa g.yug*), wolves, and foxes for their skins; eagles for their feathers; and other wild animals whose skins were valuable. He was from Rgya nang (Yangjia 杨家) Village, had a long narrow chin with a scraggly beard, and was thus called 'Mr. Chin' (Rgya ma ne).

mountains. I already wanted to go with her, and when I heard about the birds, I was filled with an even greater desire to do so. Finally, my parents agreed, and I was finally tied on a saddled donkey and taken into the serene mountains.

On the way up to our destination, Grandmother told me some amusing folktales and also taught me a beautiful Tibetan love song that I still remember:

¹ rgod thang dkar snying la rje bo
² brag dmar ro rig na 'gro la khad
³ dgung sngon po rig na 'phur la khad
⁴ bya khyod tsho'i sems de nyis 'gal red
⁵ nga nyis 'gal bya zig dgos don med

⁶ rogs chung lo snying la rje bo
⁷ rogs nged tsho rig na rtse la khad
⁸ khyim chung ma rig na 'gro la khad
⁹ rogs khyod tsho'i sems de nyis 'ga' red
¹⁰ nga nyis 'ga' rogs zig dgos don med

¹ γko thəŋ γkar ŋəŋ lə dʒi ʊ
² dʒax γmər ru rəx na ndʒu lə khe
³ gəŋ ŋon bo rəx na phər lə khe
⁴ ʒl ʒho tshi səm ti ŋi ŋl re
⁵ ŋl ŋi ŋl ʒl zəx γgi ton me

⁶ rox ʈhəŋ lu ŋəŋ lə dʒi ʊ
⁷ rox ŋe tsho rək na rtse lə khe
⁸ ʒhəm ʈhəŋ ml rək na ndʒo lə khe
⁹ rox ʒho tshi səm ti ŋi ŋl re
¹⁰ ŋl ŋi ŋl rox zəx γgi ton me

- ¹ You pretty, poor vulture,
² You try to land when you see the red cliff,
³ You try to fly away when you see the blue sky,
⁴ You bird, your mind is two-sided,
⁵ I don't need such a duplicitous bird.
- ⁶ You pretty, poor lover,
⁷ You try to play¹⁶ when you see me,
⁸ You try to sneak away when you see your wife,
⁹ You lover, your mind is two-sided,
¹⁰ I don't need such a duplicitous lover.

It was late afternoon when we reached a mountaintop and could clearly view the majesty of the So zis Mountains that lay sprawled before us. In my imagination, they resembled a huge statue of a wrathful mountain deity that I had seen in shrines. We had a short rest, and Grandmother pointed to the lower part of the mountains where lines of smoke strode straight into the scenic sky. The whole area was covered with dense forests. All that could be heard was the bleating of goats and the chirping of birds. As we sat atop the mountain, a melodious traditional song drifted up to us. "Oh, that's Mr. Sausage (Skal dan¹⁷) singing," said Grandmother, jerking her head up and peering around.

¹⁶ To play by singing *la gzhas* 'Tibetan love songs' antiphonally in competition, while audience members gather round, drink, and meanwhile, tuck money in the hat bands and in the braids of those whose songs attract them.

¹⁷ Sausage = (Literary Tibetan) *rgyu ma* or *g.yos rgyu*. Colloquial terms include *g.yos* and *skal dan*; *g.yos* is the short term for *g.yos rgyu* used by locals. *Skal dan* is also a common local term for a piece or pieces of sausages and other small pieces of internal organs that a family gives to

Startled, I asked, "Do people really have such weird names?"

"He is one of our neighbors. People here are called by the nicknames that we give each other. He was given this name because of the shape of his body," she replied.

"What's your nickname? What do your neighbors call you?" I asked.

She shook her head, laughed, and said, "You will learn mine soon." She then stood and tried to tie me back on the donkey, but I resisted because I was tired of sitting on the donkey after more than seven hours. She then carried me on her back to her cottage, which was a building surrounded by a line of living bushes, which were home to darting, chirping birds. The cottage was small but the fence around it was very large for it was also used as a yak enclosure. The cottage walls were thin and made up of canes of wood woven together and then coated with a firm layer of dried yak-dung as insulation. A small window permitted a few rays of light to enter the room. Inside the small cottage, there were sacks full of dried bread, butter, cheese, edible roots (*gro ma*, *renshen guo* 人參果), parched barley flour (*rtsam pa*), and potatoes. Meat hung from the rafters to keep it safe from rats. There was no real door; instead a bundle of wood blocked the entrance when Grandmother was away. Anyone who passed by this cottage could enter any time to rest and eat what was there.

each family in Pha bzhi as a share when a pig, a yak, or a sheep is slaughtered (usually in October) for winter use. Parents prepare plates with *skal dan* according to the number of households in the community and ask their children to take the *skal dan* to each household.

Grandmother seemed tired. After taking a deep breath, she unloaded a bundle of bread from the donkey just as some men howled loudly, as though they were competing to see who could howl the loudest. Their howls echoed in the tranquil So zis Valley.

"Who are those people? Why are they howling so loudly?" I asked.

"They are herders here from our village. They came here a long time ago and they seldom leave this area. You haven't met them. They live just down there and we are all neighbors," Grandmother replied, not answering my second question.

"Why are they howling so loudly?" I asked again.

"There are many wolves here that kill our livestock. Wolves are afraid of human shouts, so they are scaring away the wolves," Grandmother explained.

I ran to a corner of the fence where I could see the men coming up towards our cottage. I ran back to Grandmother in apprehension.

Very soon, three older men and one middle-aged man brought a kettle of hot milk tea that they had readied for us. Grandmother smiled appreciatively. Their garments were made from animal skins. They talked quickly and loudly, as if they were one hundred meters apart. They asked Grandmother about our village and me—my name and my age. "His father is a big, tall man but he doesn't seem to grow tall. He takes after his mother," said one man who had a huge beard and who was nicknamed Uncle Beard (A khu Rgya). Then they continued their discussion, delving into my maternal lineage. They said that my mother's uncle was also very short and so were his children; therefore, I must

take after my mother's uncle. Meanwhile, I went outside.

When I returned about an hour later, Grandmother was stoking a fire under a big pot. In the area for sitting in front of the hearth, a bearded man topped by a white skullcap was skinning a goat-like animal. I dared not look closely. The man looked at me and smiled.

I had negative impressions of Muslims because, "We will give you to a Muslim," is a commonly used utterance parents use to stop children from crying.

"Who is this person?" I cried.

Before Grandmother could answer, the man said in perfect Tibetan, "I am Ma Fumin. We are all friends."

I quickly moved close to Grandmother and asked, "What is he doing with that?" pointing to the dead animal being cut into pieces.

"He is a Muslim hunter. He hunts musk deer and foxes. He comes here every year and stays for some months. We have become friends. That's a musk deer that he killed this afternoon. He often gives us the meat. We will cook it for supper," Grandmother said and then muttered some prayers.

"Why do you let him in our cottage?" I asked.

"Our neighbors made friends with him. They wanted me to be the cook so I have to cook what we have," explained Grandmother as she added more firewood under the pot. By then, Ma Fumin had finished butchering the animal and added pieces of meat into the now boiling pot. There were five herders. Grandmother was their cook. In return, they tended our livestock.

In the evenings, when they had driven the livestock into their enclosures, they were content to

congregate in our cottage to eat and talk. At times, they mumbled strange words to each other that I found incomprehensible. Once they came up with a topic, whether small or big, they talked about it thoroughly without eliminating a single bit of information. Whatever they brought into their conversation was made special and fun by embellishing it with old proverbs that made their language colorful. Every evening they had something new to talk about and their discussions lasted deep into the night. Their meetings usually ended with storytelling. This was how those humble herders enjoyed their leisure time.

A half-year passed happily. Then a boy, Don 'grub, came to the area with his mother, an older woman who was deaf. She gestured to communicate with others. She was called A ye Baba because *ba-ba* was the only sound she could make and she would make this sound repeatedly whenever she gestured. They settled and became our neighbors. Don 'grub was my age and soon became my playmate.

We loved to listen to the old herders' talks and stories as well as the tongue twisters that they taught us every night. They said a tongue twister and then praised us when we repeated it correctly. We tried hard to perfectly pronounce what we were taught. And when we did, we were delighted. They talked about their youth and people's bravery from bygone times, told intriguing stories, and repeated tongue twisters that made our long, quiet nights slip by quickly and enjoyably.

Mr. Sausage was a quiet man who struggled to fill the moments between his silences with something fun. Now and then he would sensitively articulate riddles and tongue twisters that referred to

human reproductive organs that brought both
laughter and shocked silence to our humble cottage.
The riddle below was one of his favorites:

¹ pha bong gnyis kyi khri steng na
² klu btsan rgyal po khri la bzhugs
³ mgo na sta res rgyab shul yod
⁴ ske na thag pa drud shul yod

¹ phΛ γəŋ ŋi jə tʃhə rtəŋ nΛ
² γlə tsan jɛl wo tʃhə lΛ zəx
³ ngo nΛ rtΛ ri jəb hçe yo
⁴ γki nΛ thax pΛ dzə hçe yo

¹ Atop the throne of two boulders,
² The wrathful *nāga*¹⁸ King is enthroned.
³ There, on its head is a slit,¹⁹ left by an ax,
⁴ There, around its neck, is a rub²⁰ left by a rope.

¹⁸ *Klu* = *nāga* in Sanskrit and literally means 'snake' and more specifically 'cobra'. The *nāga* are mythically believed to be half-human and half-serpent beings living mainly in water (lakes, springs, oceans), wet forest areas, and perhaps even in a single tree. They resemble snakes and frogs and may change into human form. *Klu* as water-spirits and serpent beings are conceived of as mighty and wrathful; they can help or harm. They wreak vengeance by provoking infectious diseases and skin ailments when they are offended. Belief in and ritual practices related to *nāga* were vibrant in Tibetan communities in 2008.

¹⁹ The meatus or opening of the urethra, is at the tip of the glans penis.

²⁰ The sulcus or groove in the penile shaft behind the glans penis.

One of his oft-repeated tongue twisters is easily mispronounced:

1

a khu rgyal po'i mna' ma
Uncle King's Daughter-in-law

a khu rgyal po tshang gi mna' ma gi gnya' gi gnyer
ma gi nang na shig zig yod gi

a khə jəl ũ tshaŋ kə na ma kə ŋa kə ŋer mΛ
kə naŋ nΛ hçək zəx jo kə

In the fold of Uncle King's family's daughter-in-law's neck, there's a louse.

The humor of this tongue twister derives from the sound similarity between *nya ma* 'vagina' and *gnyer ma* 'fold'.

One of the most enjoyable times was the competitions Don 'grub and I had with tongue twisters. We challenged each other to say a tongue twister quickly in a short, given time without mispronunciation, sentence or word disorder, and word omission. Before each competition, we discussed what the loser would have to do for the winner. Sometimes, the loser carried the winner on his back for a predetermined distance, and sometimes the loser had to obey the winner, as though a king were giving commands. We called the winner the King and the loser the Minister.

At age nine, I left this place to attend school in my home village, spelling an end to my close association with tongue twisters and many other marvels.

When I was studying at Qinghai Normal University during the late 1990s and early twenty-first century, a few students from Amdo occasionally repeated their own local tongue twisters. Here is one example:

2

gus tsong
Leek and Shallot

gus tsong gnyis gi gong gang dka' gong gus dka'
gong tsong dka'

ki tsoŋ ɳək kə koŋ kaŋ ɣka koŋ ki ɣka koŋ
tsoŋ ɣka

Which is more expensive, leek or shallot? Leek is expensive but shallot is more expensive.

TONGUE TWISTER CHARACTERISTICS

The formal term for 'tongue twister' in Tibetan is *ngag sbyang rtsom rig*. However, most Tibetans living in the area this article focuses on refer to them as *kha bshad* 'oral sayings'. We have chosen to translate *kha bshad* as 'tongue twisters' rather than 'oral sayings' as this term better reflects the nature of the material under consideration, and employing the term 'oral sayings' suggests something akin to 'idioms' or 'expressions'.

Local consultants were unable to provide any information on the origins of tongue twister origins; either their beginnings or their creators.

Tibetan tongue twisters develop facility in the Tibetan language and instruct children in knowledge of human nature, daily life, wildlife, livestock, counting,

farming, plants, snow, rain, water, the sun, the moon, the stars, and all that confirm the world in which they live. Another distinctive characteristic of Tibetan tongue twisters is that learning and repeating them is fun; as indicated in the personal account above. The ingenious use of language in Tibetan tongue twisters puts tongue twisters on par with great poems—they are an important part of Tibetan oral literature.

Tongue twisters are composed of clusters of words and phrases that have a succession of similar consonantal sounds that makes the voice move up and down rhythmically and repeatedly. This helps children perceive the differences between sounds and assists in achieving clear pronunciation.

Each tongue twister has a particular intonation, rhythm, and stress pattern and should be said as quickly as possible. The 'correct' performance of a tongue twister involves attention to these elements, as well as word order and vocabulary choice.

A number of similar consonant sounds are used sequentially in examples of tongue twisters provided in this paper. Such sounds make it difficult to articulate the tongue twisters quickly and accurately. For instance, *gnya'* *nya*, *gnya'* *gnyer*, *tsong'* *gong*, *gus'* *gang*, *drug'* *grig*, *bzhi'* *gzhu*, *bdun'* *ldum*, *lnga'* *nga*, *brgyad'* *sgyel* and so forth, relying on properties unique to Amdo phonology. Furthermore, such terms as *'then* *'then*, *rdung* *rdung*, and *rgyag* *rgyag* (Tongue Twister Three) are a significant part of colloquial Amdo. These structures rely on the duplication of a verb, and give the meaning, 'Just like the way something is done'.

EXAMPLES OF TONGUE TWISTERS

3

btsog bshad

Dirty Saying

It is taboo to repeat this tongue twister in the home or within earshot of relatives. Such tongue twisters are most commonly said in the mountains, at parties where friends of the same age gather, and when people are herding or at work and no relatives are nearby. Though often heard in the mid-1980s, this tongue twister was almost never heard in 2008. It may be the last 'dirty saying' still extant in the local area.

- ¹ gcig mdzag nya ma'i kha red
- ² gnyis mdzag nya ma'i dkyil red
- ³ gsum mdzag nya ma'i gting red
- ⁴ bzhi mdzag gzhu phrug 'then 'then
- ⁵ lnga mdzag rnga tsis rdung rdung
- ⁶ drug mdzag grig ril rgyag rgyag
- ⁷ bdun mdzag ldum bu rtsag rtsag
- ⁸ brgyad mdzag rgyed gi rgyed gi
- ⁹ dgu mdzag sgur gi sgur gi
- ¹⁰ bcu mdzag zer ra bu gcig btsas
- ¹¹ bu gi mying nga 'dod lha zer
- ¹² 'dod lha mi zer rta ser zer
- ¹³ rta ser mi zer bong ser zer

- ¹ htək zəx ɲa mi kha re
- ² ɲi zəx ɲa mi htɕi re
- ³ səm zəx ɲa mi htəŋ re
- ⁴ zə zəx zə tʂhəg then then
- ⁵ ɲa zəx ɲa htʂi rdun rdun
- ⁶ tʂəg zəx dzəg ri jəg jəg
- ⁷ dun zəx dum mbə hstəg hstəg

⁸ jet zəx jet kə jet kə
⁹ gə zəx gər gə gər gə
¹⁰ tɛə zəx ser ra wə tɛəg si
¹¹ wə kə ɲaŋ ɲa do ʔa ser
¹² do ʔa mə ser ɣta ser ser
¹³ ɣta sher mə ser ɣəŋ sher ser

¹ Having sex once, it reaches the vagina's mouth,
² Having sex twice, it reaches half-way into the vagina,
³ Having sex thrice, it reaches deep inside the vagina.
⁴ Having sex four times is like pulling supple bows,
⁵ Having sex five times is like beating drums,
⁶ Having sex six times is like bouncing little balls,
⁷ Having sex seven times is like weeding the fields,
⁸ Having sex eight times makes one feeble-legged.
⁹ Having sex nine times makes one stooped,
¹⁰ Having sex ten times, a baby boy is born,
¹¹ The baby boy is named God of Desire,
¹² He's not called God of Desire, but *rta sar*,²¹
¹³ It's not *rta sar*, but it's *bong sar*.²²

4

rta dkar nag gnyis
Two Horses, Black and White

'Two Horses, Black and White' compares black horses and white horses that Tibetan children often encountered in the

²¹ A *rta sar* is a good, adult male horse that has not been castrated and is kept especially for breeding.

²² A *bong sar* is a good, adult male donkey that has not been castrated and is kept especially for breeding.

past.²³ By learning this tongue twister, children learn to easily distinguish between the colors black and white.

¹ rta dkar dkar rnga ma nag nag can
² rnga ma nag nag gi rta dkar dkar can
³ rta dkar dkar rnga ma dkar dkar can
⁴ rnga ma dkar dkar gi rta dkar dkar can
⁵ rta nag nag rnga ma dkar dkar can
⁶ rnga ma dkar dkar gi rta nag nag can
⁷ rta nag nag rnga ma nag nag can
⁸ rnga ma nag nag gi rta nag nag can

¹ yta ykar ykar yña ma nax nax tɛan
² yña ma nax nax kə yta ykar ykar tɛan
³ yta ykar ykar yña ma ykar ykar tɛan
⁴ yña ma ykar ykar kə yta ykar ykar tɛan
⁵ yta nax nax yña ma ykar ykar tɛan
⁶ yña ma ykar ykar kə yta nax nax tɛan
⁷ yta nax nax yña ma nax nax tɛan
⁸ yña ma nax nax kə yta nax nax tɛan

¹ White, white horses with black, black tails,
² Black, black-tailed white, white horses.
³ White, white horses with white, white tails,
⁴ White, white-tailed white, white horses.
⁵ Black, black horses with white, white tails,
⁶ White, white-tailed black, black horses.
⁷ Black, black horses with black, black tails,
⁸ Black, black-tailed black, black horses.

²³ There were few horses in the local area in 2008. Motorcycles had replaced them. Most households owned mules and donkeys for farm work.

5

glang ngu dkar dmar gnyis
Two Bulls, Red and White

'Two Bulls, Red and White' emphasizes the differences between big and small by comparing a white bull with big hooves and a dark-red bull with small hooves. Such bulls are common in the area.

¹ glang ngu dkar po'i rmig pa dmar ro chung

² rmig pa dmar po'i glang ngu dkar ro che

³ glang ngu dmar po'i rmig pa dkar ro chung

⁴ rmig pa dkar po'i glang ngu dmar ro che

¹ γlan̄ŋ n̄ə γkar pi rm̄əx pa γm̄ər ru t̄h̄əŋ

² rm̄əx pa γm̄ər pi γlan̄ŋ n̄ə γkar ru t̄əhe

³ γlan̄ŋ n̄ə γm̄ər pi rm̄əx pa γkar ru t̄h̄əŋ

⁴ rm̄əx pa γkar pi γlan̄ŋ n̄ə γm̄ər ru t̄əhe

¹ White bulls' red hooves are small,

² Red-hoofed white bulls are big.

³ Red bulls' white hooves are small,

⁴ White hoofed red bulls are big.

6

ba lug blo ro
Lung-diseased Cattle and Sheep

'Lung-diseased Cattle and Sheep' presents a vivid image of two ill animals. This tongue twister is formed with just four words that also form its title. Its use and repetition of *ba* (pronounced *wa*), *lug*, *blo* (pronounced *lo*), and *ro* rigorously exercise the tongue and help children gain facility in pronouncing Tibetan.

¹ ba blo ro lug blo ro

² lug blo ro ba blo ro

³ ba lug blo ro

⁴ lug ba blo ro

¹ wΛ ɣlu ru ləx ɣlu ru

² ləx ɣlu ru wΛ ɣlu ru

³ wΛ ləx ɣlu ru

⁴ ləx wΛ ɣlu ru

¹ Lung-diseased cattle, lung-diseased sheep.

² Lung-diseased sheep, lung-diseased cattle.

³ Lung-diseased cattle and sheep.

⁴ Lung-diseased sheep and cattle.

7

ma ne nang gi gser

Gold in the Chin

'Gold in the Chin' begins with a simple question and proceeds with a chain of pertinent questions, each of which is given a short, complete answer. Two children commonly practice such tongue twisters surrounded by their attentively listening playmates. This tongue twister challenges children to give quick answers and, importantly, encourages improvisation to create questions.

¹ A: khyo'i ma ne nang na ci yod

² B: nga'i ma ne nang na gser yod

³ A: gser ga re

⁴ B: gser sgam nang na yod

⁵ A: sgam ga re

⁶ B: sgam rtswa phung 'og na yod

⁷ A: rtswa phung ga re

⁸ B: rtswa mdzo mos zos thal

⁹ A: mdzo mo ga re

¹⁰ B: mdzo mo la mgor 'gos thal

¹¹ A: la ga re

¹² B: la khangs gi mnan thal

¹³ A: khangs ga re

¹⁴ B: khangs nyi mas gzhus thal

¹⁵ A: nyi ma ga re

¹⁶ B: ...

¹⁷ A: ... ?

¹ A: jhi ma ne naŋ na tɕə jod

² B: ŋi ma ne naŋ na ser jod

³ A: ser ka re

⁴ B: ser gam naŋ na jod

⁵ A: gam ka re

⁶ B: gam htsa phuŋ ok na jod

⁷ A: htsa phuŋ ka re

⁸ B: htsa mdzo mi si tha

⁹ A: mdzo mo ka re

¹⁰ B: mdzo mo la mgor gi tha

¹¹ A: la ka re

¹² B: la khaŋ kə nan tha

¹³ A: khaŋ ka re

¹⁴ B: khaŋ ŋə mi zi tha

¹⁵ A: ŋə ma ka re

¹⁶ B: ...

¹⁷ A: ... ?

¹ A: What's there in your chin?

² B: There's gold in my chin.

³ A: Where is the gold?

⁴ B: The gold is in a box.

⁵ A: Where is the box?

⁶ B: The box is under a pile of hay.

⁷ A: Where is the hay?

⁸ B: The *mdzo mo*²⁴ ate the hay.

⁹ A: Where is the *mdzo mo*?

¹⁰ B: The *mdzo mo* climbed up the mountain pass.

¹¹ A: Where is the mountain pass?

¹² B: Snow has covered the mountain pass.

¹³ A: Where is the snow?

¹⁴ B: The sun melted the snow.

¹⁵ A: Where is the sun?

¹⁶ B: ...

¹⁷ A: ... ?

8

a zhang tshang gi khang thog na
On the Roof of Uncle's Home

Drying grain on the roof of houses is a common practice and people are angry when birds eat the grain. 'On The Roof of Uncle's Home' is recited rhythmically by a group of children.

¹ a zhang tshang gi khang thog na

² gro 'bru nas 'bru tha ra ra

³ bye'u thu zig gi btus srol ltos

⁴ bye'u thu bye'u thi ma zer dang

⁵ bye'u thu khya gis bsad thal

⁶ khya khya ma zer dang

⁷ khya brag 'a babs thal

⁸ brag brag ma zer dang

⁹ brag 'a 'jag ma khebs thal

¹⁰ 'jag ma 'jag ma ma zer dang

¹¹ 'jag ma ra mas btogs thal

¹² ra ma ra ma ma zer dang

¹³ ra ma spyang kis bsad thal

²⁴ A *mdzo mo* is a yak-cow cross that is valued for its milk production.

¹⁴ spyang ki spyang ki ma zer dang
¹⁵ spyang ki nags 'a bros thal
¹⁶ nags nags ma zer dang
¹⁷ nags sta res bcad thal
¹⁸ sta re sta re ma zer dang
¹⁹ sta re mgar bas khyer thal
²⁰ mgar ba mgar ba ma zer dang
²¹ mgar ba 'dam ma zug thal
²² 'dam 'dam ma zer dang
²³ 'dam nyi mas ldag thal
²⁴ nyi ma nyi ma ma zer dang
²⁵ nyi ma tshang nga lhung thal
²⁶ tshang tshang ma zer dang
²⁷ tshang rlung gis spur thal
²⁸ rlung rlung ma zer dang
²⁹ rlung bya rgyal gshog pas khyer thal
³⁰ bya rgyal bya rgyal ma zer dang
³¹ bya rgyal khyod kyis rjes mi zin

¹ a zaŋ tshaŋ kə khaŋ thok na
² co mɔ̯ə ni mɔ̯ə tha ra ra
³ ɕi tə zəx kə ti sol hti
⁴ ɕi tə ɕi tə ma ser taŋ
⁵ ɕi tə ʃhʌ ki ɕsəd tha
⁶ ʃhʌ ʃhʌ ma ser taŋ
⁷ ʃhʌ dzax a wab daŋ
⁸ dzax dzax ma ser daŋ
⁹ dzax a ndzək ma htɕi tha
¹⁰ ndzək ma ndzək ma ma ser daŋ
¹¹ ndzək ma ra mi tog tha
¹² ra ma ra ma ma ser daŋ
¹³ ra ma htɕaŋ ki ɕsəd tha
¹⁴ htɕaŋ kə htɕaŋ kə ma ser daŋ
¹⁵ htɕaŋ kə nag a pɕsi tha
¹⁶ nag nag ma ser daŋ
¹⁷ nag ʂta ri cad tha

¹⁸ hta ri hta ri ma ser daŋ
¹⁹ ʃta re mgar wi ʃher tha
²⁰ mgar ba mgar ba ma ser daŋ
²¹ mkar ba dam ma zək tha
²² dam dam ma ser daŋ
²³ dam nə mi dəg tha
²⁴ nə ma nə ma ma ser daŋ
²⁵ nə ma tshaŋ ɲa ɭuŋ tha
²⁶ tshaŋ tshaŋ ma ser daŋ
²⁷ tshaŋ rluŋ ki ɸpər tha
²⁸ rluŋ rluŋ ma ser daŋ
²⁹ rluŋ ɕʌ ʒel hək pi ʃher tha
³⁰ ɕa ʒel ɕʌ ʒel ma ser daŋ
³¹ ɕʌ ʒel ʃho ci rji mə zən

¹ On the roof of Uncle's home,
² Barley and wheat grain are scattered everywhere.
³ Observe how the bird picks up grain.
⁴ Don't just say, 'Bird, bird,'
⁵ A hawk has killed the bird.
⁶ Don't just say, 'Hawk, hawk,'
⁷ The hawk has flown to a cliff.
⁸ Don't just say, 'Cliff, cliff,'
⁹ Weeds have covered the cliff.
¹⁰ Don't just say, 'Weeds, weeds,'
¹¹ A goat has consumed the weeds.
¹² Don't just say, 'Goat, goat,'
¹³ A wolf has killed the goat.
¹⁴ Don't just say, 'Wolf, wolf,'
¹⁵ The wolf has run into the woods.
¹⁶ Don't just say, 'Woods, woods,'
¹⁷ An ax has chopped the woods.
¹⁸ Don't just say, 'Ax, ax,'
¹⁹ A blacksmith has taken the ax,
²⁰ Don't just say, 'Blacksmith, blacksmith,'
²¹ The blacksmith has got stuck in the mud.

- ²² Don't just say, 'Mud, mud,'
²³ The sun has licked the mud.
²⁴ Don't just say, 'Sun, sun,'
²⁵ The sun has dropped into its nest.
²⁶ Don't just say, 'Nest, nest,'
²⁷ The wind has blown the nest away.
²⁸ Don't just say, 'Wind, wind,'
²⁹ The garuda's wings have ravished the wind.
³⁰ Don't just say, 'Garuda, garuda,'
³¹ You cannot catch the garuda.

9

gser gyi ka sder ra²⁵
Great Golden Bowl

This tongue twister is related to counting and describes Yar nang shar,²⁶ a local place, and teaches how to count. One child recites this tongue twister as others carefully listen. If the child who is reciting inhales or miscounts, they have failed, and another child may try.

- ¹ yar nang shar gi brag khung nang na
² gser gyi ka sder ra nyi shu rtsa lnga yod zer gi
³ de dbugs kha gcig gis mi phyin zer gi
⁴ de dbugs kha gcig gis phyin btang na
⁵ ma Ni dung phyur zig gi phan yon yod zer gi

²⁵ *Ka sder ra* = a local term for bigger bowls with lower, wider brims; *ka* = *dkar yol* 'bowls'; *sder* = *sder ma* 'plates'; and *ra* = emphasizes size or greatness.

²⁶ Yar nang shar 'Upper Eastern Mountain' is the site of an abandoned monastery. Local people believe that there are many treasures hidden here, but no one dares search for the treasures because they believe that if they dig in sacred places, bad luck will befall them. Certain local monks meditate in the cave year round.

⁶ gser gyi ka sder ra gcig
⁷ gser gyi ka sder ra gnyis
⁸ gser gyi ka sder ra gsum
⁹ gser gyi ka sder ra bzhi
¹⁰ gser gyi ka sder ra lnga
¹¹ gser gyi ka sder ra drug
¹² gser gyi ka sder ra bdun
¹³ gser gyi ka sder ra brgyad
¹⁴ gser gyi ka sder ra dgu
¹⁵ gser gyi ka sder ra bcu tham pa
¹⁶ gser gyi ka sder ra bcu gcig
¹⁷ gser gyi ka sder ra bcu gnyis
¹⁸ gser gyi ka sder ra bcu gsum
¹⁹ gser gyi ka sder ra bcu bzhi
²⁰ gser gyi ka sder ra bco lnga
²¹ gser gyi ka sder ra bcu drug
²² gser gyi ka sder ra bcu bdun
²³ gser gyi ka sder ra bco brgyad
²⁴ gser gyi ka sder ra bcu dgu
²⁵ gser gyi ka sder ra nyi shu
²⁶ gser gyi ka sder ra nyer gcig
²⁷ gser gyi ka sder ra nyer gnyis
²⁸ gser gyi ka sder ra nyer gsum
²⁹ gser gyi ka sder ra nyer bzhi
³⁰ gser gyi ka sder ra nyer lnga

¹ jar naŋ ɕar gə tʂək khuŋ naŋ na
² ser gə ka der ra nə ɕə rtsa ŋa jod ser kə
³ de ək ka htək ki mə cən ser kə
⁴ de ək ka htək ki cən taŋ na
⁵ ma nə tuŋ cər zəx kə han jun jod ser kə
⁶ ser gə ka der ra tək
⁷ ser gə ka der ra ŋi
⁸ ser gə ka der ra səm
⁹ ser gə ka der ra zə
¹⁰ ser gə ka der ra ŋa

- ¹¹ ser gə ka der ra tʂək
¹² ser gə ka der ra dən
¹³ ser gə ka der ra jed
¹⁴ ser gə ka der ra gə
¹⁵ ser gə ka der ra cə tham pa
¹⁶ ser gə ka der ra cə htək
¹⁷ ser gə ka der ra cə ɲi
¹⁸ ser gə ka der ra cə səm
¹⁹ ser gə ka der ra cə zə
²⁰ ser gə ka der ra co ɲa
²¹ ser gə ka der ra cə tʂək
²² ser gə ka der ra cə dən
²³ ser gə ka der ra co jed
²⁴ ser gə ka der ra cə gə
²⁵ ser gə ka der ra ɲə ʂə
²⁶ ser gə ka der ra ɲer htək
²⁷ ser gə ka der ra ɲer ɲi
²⁸ ser gə ka der ra ɲer səm
²⁹ ser gə ka der ra ɲer zə
³⁰ ser gə ka der ra ɲer ɲa

- ¹ Inside the upper eastern mountain cave,
² It is said that there are twenty-five great golden bowls;
³ It is said that no one can count them in a single breath.
⁴ If they are counted with one breath,
⁵ It brings the virtue of having chanted one hundred million
prayers.
⁶ Great golden bowl one,
⁷ Great golden bowl two,
⁸ Great golden bowl three,
⁹ Great golden bowl four,
¹⁰ Great golden bowl five,
¹¹ Great golden bowl six,
¹² Great golden bowl seven,
¹³ Great golden bowl eight,
¹⁴ Great golden bowl nine,

- ¹⁵ Great golden bowl ten,
¹⁶ Great golden bowl eleven,
¹⁷ Great golden bowl twelve,
¹⁸ Great golden bowl thirteen,
¹⁹ Great golden bowl fourteen,
²⁰ Great golden bowl fifteen,
²¹ Great golden bowl sixteen,
²² Great golden bowl seventeen,
²³ Great golden bowl eighteen,
²⁴ Great golden bowl nineteen,
²⁵ Great golden bowl twenty,
²⁶ Great golden bowl twenty-one,
²⁷ Great golden bowl twenty-two,
²⁸ Great golden bowl twenty-three,
²⁹ Great golden bowl twenty-four,
³⁰ Great golden bowl twenty-five.

10

a bcu cha bcu

Ten Perfect Matches

'Ten Perfect Matches' is also related to counting and is performed in many different ways. One of the most common ways is by asking, "Can you say *a bcu cha bcu*?" Someone quickly answers while others carefully listen for mispronunciations and other mistakes. It also might be performed by a child saying the first four words of a line (e.g., *a gcig cha gcig*) and another child completing the sentence by saying the remaining words of that line (e.g., *bse ru rwa gcig*). It is also used as a game at drinking parties by, for example, the first person saying the first line, followed by the second person saying the second line, and so on. Furthermore, this tongue twister might be said in reverse, i.e., the first person says line ten, the second person says line nine, and so on. When someone makes a mistake

they are laughed at and punished, e.g., told to drink a cup of liquor.

- ¹ a gcig cha gcig bse ru rwa gcig
- ² a gnyis cha gnyis ra ma nu gnyis
- ³ a gsum cha gsum thab ka 'go gsum
- ⁴ a bzhi cha bzhi mdzo mo nu bzhi
- ⁵ a lnga cha lnga mdzub gu spun lnga
- ⁶ a drug cha drug skar ma smin drug
- ⁷ a bdun cha bdun skar ma sme bdun
- ⁸ a brgyad cha brgyad sha bo rwa brgyad
- ⁹ a dgu cha dgu srin po mgo dgu
- ¹⁰ a bcu cha bcu khyi mo nu bcu

- ¹ a htək t̥cha htək si rə ra htək
- ² a ɲi t̥cha ɲi ra ma nə ɲi
- ³ a səm t̥cha səm thab ka mgo səm
- ⁴ a zə t̥cha zə mdzo mo nə zə
- ⁵ a ɲa t̥cha ɲa mdzə kə ɸpən ɲa
- ⁶ a t̥sək t̥cha t̥sək skar ma mən t̥sək
- ⁷ a dən t̥cha dən skar ma me dən
- ⁸ a rjed t̥cha rjed ɕa ũ ra rjed
- ⁹ a gə t̥cha gə sən po mgo gə
- ¹⁰ a cə t̥cha cə ɟhə mo nə cə

- ¹ Saying one, say of the rhinoceros with one horn,
- ² Saying two, say of the goat with two teats,
- ³ Saying three, say of the stove that has three legs,
- ⁴ Saying four, say of the *mdzo mo* that has four teats,
- ⁵ Saying five, say of the fingers that are five brothers,
- ⁶ Saying six, say of the Pleiades that has six stars,
- ⁷ Saying seven, say of *sme bdur*²⁷ that has seven stars,
- ⁸ Saying eight, say of the deer with eight-spiked antlers,
- ⁹ Saying nine, say of the demon with nine heads,
- ¹⁰ Saying ten, say of females dogs with ten teats.

²⁷ A constellation.

11

a tsha tsha²⁸

Ouch!

'Ouch!' is performed by two children (Child A and Child B) starting with a pinch on the back of one's hand. Child B pinches Child A's hand. Child A sensitively says, 'Ouch!' expressing pain. Then Child B quickly asks what the matter is and more strongly pinches Child A's hand until Child A answers. When Child A finds a proper answer, his hand is released and his hand goes atop Child B's hand, which he pinches until Child B answers.

¹ A: a tsha tsha

² B: ci zig red?

³ A: tsa ma tsi tog gis so 'debs gi

⁴ B: ya ma yang tog gi mgor bud la thongs

⁵ khrag chi mo zig yong thal?

⁶ A: rdza ma gang yong thal

⁷ B: rnag chi mo zig yong thal

⁸ A: rnag rdze'u mo gang yong thal

⁹ B: khrag snag ga re?

¹⁰ A: khrag rdza ma la rdze'u mo nang na yod

¹¹ B: rdza ma dang rdze'u mo ga re?

¹² A: rdza ma dang rdze'u mo hob khung nang na yod

¹³ B: hob khung ga re?

¹⁴ A: hob khung rtswa yis kha bkab yod

¹⁵ B: rtswa ga re?

¹⁶ A: rtswa mdzo mos zos thal

¹⁷ B: mdzo mo ga re?

¹⁸ A: mdzo mo spyang kis zos thal

¹⁹ B: spyang ki ga re?

²⁰ A: ...

²⁸ *A tsha tsha* expresses sudden, external pain.

¹ A: a tsha tsha

² B: tʃhə zəx re

³ A: tsa ma tsə tok kə so deb kə

⁴ B: ja ma jaŋ tok kə go wəd la thoŋ

⁵ chək tɕhə mo zəx joŋ tha

⁶ A: rdza ma kaŋ joŋ tha

⁷ B: nək tɕhə mo zəx joŋ tha

⁸ A: nək rdzə mo kaŋ joŋ tha

⁹ B: chək nək ka re

¹⁰ A: chək rdza ma la rdzə mo naŋ na jod

¹¹ B: rdza ma daŋ rdzə mo ka re

¹² A: rdza ma daŋ rdzə mo hob khuŋ naŋ na jod

¹³ B: hob khuŋ ka re

¹⁴ A: hob khuŋ rtsa ji kha kab jod

¹⁵ B: rtsa ka re

¹⁶ A: rtsa mdzo mi zi tha

¹⁷ B: mdzo mo ka re

¹⁸ A: mdzo mo htɕaŋ ki zi tha

¹⁹ B: htɕaŋ kə ka re

²⁰ A: ...

¹ A: Ouch!

² B: What's the matter?

³ A: The *tsa ma tsi tog*²⁹ bit me.

⁴ B: Go atop the *ya ma yang tog*.³⁰

²⁹ A nettle.

³⁰ Blo rtan rdo rje comments, "When I was a child, I often played this game with playmates but never knew the meaning of *ya ma yang tog*. When I asked village elders what *ya ma yang tog* was some said it was a soft, smooth, leafy plant. But no one I talked to had ever seen it or could describe its color, height, or where it grew. *Ya ma yang tog* might carry the same meaning as *ya ma yang 'dug*, which is often heard in Amdo villagers' daily talk meaning 'stay relaxed'. Another possibility is that in the previous line the

⁵ How much did it bleed?

⁶ A: One big clay-pot-full,

⁷ B: How much pus did it emit?

⁸ A: One small clay-pot-full.

⁹ B: Where are the blood and pus?

¹⁰ A: In the big clay-pot and the small clay-pot.

¹¹ B: Where are the big and small clay-pots?

¹² A: The big and small clay-pots are in the *hob kung*.³¹

¹³ B: Where is the *hob kung*?

¹⁴ A: The *hob kung* has been shrouded with hay.

¹⁵ B: Where is the hay?

¹⁶ A: The *mdzo mo* ate it.

¹⁷ B: Where is the *mdzo mo*?

¹⁸ A: A wolf ate the *mdzo mo*.

¹⁹ B: Where is the wolf?

²⁰ A: ...

12

a mtshar mtshar dgu

The Nine Wondrous Things

'The Nine Wondrous Things' describes the natural world—stones, land, water, cliffs, the sky, the moon, grass, broom-plant, and sinkholes—and wonders at certain aspects of these elements, e.g., Why does the sky stay high without anything that lifts it? It may be performed by one person asking another, 'What are the Nine Wondrous Things?'

thorny plant (*tsha ma tsi tog*) appears and *ya ma yang tog* might have been added, suggesting a soft, smooth plant as a point of contrast."

³¹ A cellar or pit used to store mainly potatoes and turnips for winter use. Traditionally, such cellars were inside the home. In 2008, most were outside the home, in the threshing ground.

¹ rdo 'di pha ma med la 'phel no a mtshar
² thang 'di brdal ni med la bde no a mtshar
³ chu 'di 'khyid ni med la bzbur no a mtshar
⁴ brag 'di rtsig ni med la 'gyig no a mtshar
⁵ gnam 'di 'gyog ni med la mtho no a mtshar
⁶ gza' 'di 'then ni med la 'gyo no a mtshar
⁷ rtswa 'di 'debs ni med la skyes no a mtshar
⁸ rtsi to kha med la shub sgra gyags no a mtshar
⁹ na khong 'di rko ni med la gting no a mtshar

¹ rdo də pha ma met la phel no a tshar
² thaŋ də rda nə met la de no a tshar
³ tʃhə də ʃhə nə met la zər no a tshar
⁴ tʂək də rtsək nə met la ndzək no a tshar
⁵ nam də ndzok nə met la tho no a tshar
⁶ za də then nə met la ndzo no a tshar
⁷ htsa də deb nə met la t̪chi no a tshar
⁸ htsə to kha met la ɕou rja t̪æg no a tshar
⁹ na khung də hko nə met la htaŋ no a tshar

¹ How wondrous stones that increase without any parents,
² How wondrous land that stays flat without anything that
 levels it,
³ How wondrous water that flows without anything that
 leads it,
⁴ How wondrous cliffs that stay firm without anything that
 builds them,
⁵ How wondrous the sky that stays high without anything
 that lifts it,
⁶ How wondrous the moon that moves without anything that
 pulls it,
⁷ How wondrous grass that grows without anything that
 plants it,

⁸ How wondrous *rtsi to*³² that rustles without having a mouth,

⁹ How wondrous sinkholes³³ that are deep without anything that digs them.

13

a the the brgyad

The Eight Things Pertaining to One Another

'The Eight Things Pertaining to One Another' informs that musk deer eat grass, drink water, live in woods on cliffs, produce medicinal materials, have tusks, etc. It may be performed by one person asking another 'What are the eight things pertaining to one another?'

¹ gla rtswa la the

² gla chu la the

³ gla nags la the

⁴ gla brag la the

⁵ gla rtsi sman la the

⁶ gla mchod dung la the

⁷ spu mgo nag po nor la the

⁸ spu rting dkar po lug la the

¹ yla htse la thi

² yla tʃhə la thi

³ yla nak la thi

⁴ yla tʃak la thi

⁵ yla htse man la thi

⁶ yla tʃhod duŋ la thi

³² A plant that might be as much as one meter tall that grows on mountainsides and is used to make brooms.

³³ *Na khong* are found on the grassland and often contain water and grass. Some are deep and livestock may fall inside and drown.

⁷ ɸsə mgo nək po nor la thi

⁸ ɸsə htaŋ ɣkar po ləx la thi

¹ Musk deer are related to grass,

² Musk deer are related to water,

³ Musk deer are related to woods,

⁴ Musk deer are related to cliffs,

⁵ Musk is related to medicine,

⁶ Musk deer tusks are related to conch,

⁷ (Musk) black-hair tips are related to yaks,

⁸ (Musk) white-hair bases are related to sheep.

14

med la med dgu

The Nine Non-existences

'The Nine Non-existences' teach children about things that they take for granted, such as the people, animals, and birds that surround them. By learning such tongue twisters, children gain a deeper understanding of the numerous living beings that inhabit this natural world. While repeating this tongue twister, children are led to wonder about the origin of people and the nature of surrounding animals by raising questions using 'Why?', 'When?', and 'What?', e.g., 'Why do people not have tails?' To such a question, old people try to find an answer either from folktales or from their own knowledge about the world.

¹ mgo nag myi la rnga ma med

² no ho³⁴ khyi la phyi rting med

³⁴ When Blo rtan rdo rje asked Mgon po rgya mtsho, "What does *no ho* mean?" the latter replied, "It is a Mongolian word probably meaning black." Juha Janhunen writes: This information involves confusion between three words: the Mongolian words for 'green' and 'dog', and the Tibetan word

³ g.yang dkar lug la bkal 'gel med
⁴ tsi gu ra ma mgo 'dzin med
⁵ nam mkha'i bya la glo ba med
⁶ ri bong gnyid log 'a mtsher ra med
⁷ skya ga khra mor mkhal ma med
⁸ 'do rigs rta bor rva co med
⁹ thod dkar 'bri mor ya so med

¹ mgo nax n̥ə la ŋa ma met
² no ho ʃhə la ɕə htaŋ met
³ jaŋ ɣkar ləx la kal gal met
⁴ tsə kə ra ma mgo zən met
⁵ nam khi ɕʌ la ɣlo wa met
⁶ rə ɣəŋ n̥ə lok a sher ra met
⁷ ca ka cha mor kha ma met
⁸ do rəg hta wor ra t̬əo met
⁹ thod ɣkar nd̥ʒə mor ja so met

¹ Black-headed³⁵ people lack tails,
² Black dogs³⁶ lack heels,
³ Fine sheep don't carry packs,

for 'black'. The word actually occurring in the tongue twister is likely to be Mongol *noqai* > *nohoi* 'dog', Oirat *nohoo*, phonemically /noho/. Not knowing this, the informant identified the word with the Mongol item for 'green', *nogoo/n*, but again, not remembering the correct meaning of the latter, he assumed it to mean the same as the somewhat similar sounding Tibetan word *nag pa* 'black'. The original idea of the tongue twister seems to juxtapose the Mongol and Tibetan words for 'dog', yielding *noho* + *khyi* 'doggy-dog'. It may be a question of simply playing with synonymous words from two languages, though the implication may also be 'Mongolian dogs'.

³⁵ Tibetans describe humans as 'black-headed beings'.

³⁶ Dogs are usually black in this area.

- ⁴ Mice and goats lack masters,
⁵ Birds of the sky lack lungs,
⁶ Sleepy rabbits lack spleens,
⁷ Pretty magpies lack kidneys.
⁸ Fine horses lack horns,
⁹ White-foreheaded 'bri³⁷ lack upper teeth.

15

chags la chags dgu
The Nine Appearances

'The Nine Appearances' depicts a vivid world and teaches about the formation of the earth, and then gives a clear picture of a man with an ornamented hat riding a saddled horse.

- ¹ sa thog la chu chags
² chu thog la dar chags
³ dar thog la rdo chags
⁴ rdo thog la rta chags
⁵ rta thog la sga chags
⁶ sga thog la a 'jog chags
⁷ a 'jog thog la myi chags
⁸ myi thog la zhwa chags
⁹ zhwa thog la tog chags

- ¹ sha thok la t̥hə t̥həg
² t̥hə thok la dar t̥həg
³ dar thok la rdo t̥həg
⁴ rdo thok la hta t̥həg
⁵ hta thok la ga t̥həg
⁶ ga thok la a ndzok t̥həg
⁷ a ndzok thok la ɲə t̥həg
⁸ ɲə thok la ɕa t̥həg

³⁷ A female yak.

⁹ ɕa thok la tok tɕhəg

¹ Water appeared on earth,

² Ice appeared on water,

³ Rocks appeared on ice,

⁴ Horses appeared on rocks,

⁵ Saddles appeared on horses,

⁶ *a 'jog*³⁸ appeared on saddles,

⁷ People appeared on *a 'jog*,

⁸ Hats appeared on men,

⁹ Ornaments appeared on hats.

CONCLUSION

Formerly, in the course of 'Family' (*khyim tshang*)—a favorite game amongst Tibetan children in the countryside—participants dug caves that they labeled 'homes', and then acted out the roles of families based on folklore they were familiar with, such as a king's family or the Tibetan trickster, Uncle Dunba (A khu Ston pa). When they met in their caves, they first tried to come up with an appropriate folktale to model their play on, and then began to struggle for roles of higher position, such as that of king. The adept performance of tongue twisters was a key to acquiring a higher position. The children challenged each other to say such tongue twisters as those given in this paper quickly in a short, given time without mispronunciations, sentence or word disorder, and word omissions. Higher positions were assigned accordingly.

In the past, children in Pha bzhi were sent into the mountains to live with their grandparents who herded with other elders. Customarily, grandparents taught their grandchildren what their own grandparents had taught them.

³⁸ The saddle's seat.

This was an environment in which grandparents transmitted their knowledge of songs, folklore, and language through colorful speech that was intimately associated with the natural environment.

Times change. In 2008, nearly all children were sent to school at around the age of seven, where they were taught in literary Tibetan and Chinese. When schooling began, they were heavily burdened with school activities and no longer lived with their grandparents in the mountains. Instead, they lived with them at home, but school activities, homework, and the availability and popularity of television and VCD/ DVD programs meant that their contact with their grandparents was far less intimate than was the case with the previous generation. In 2008, tongue twisters, once an important aspect of Tibetan traditions, had almost vanished in Pha bzhi.

When no one listens, no one tells, and when no one tells, no one remembers.

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³⁹ Pe cin = Beijing 北京.

⁴⁰ Lan grub = Lanzhou 兰州.

AN AMDO TIBETAN VILLAGE NEW YEAR
TRANCE MEDIUM RITUAL

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ABSTRACT

Gling rgyal Village's (Tongren County, Rma lho [Huangnan] Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon [Qinghai] Province, China) Mag pa Mountain God *lha ba* Lo sar (Tibetan New Year) Ritual is described. Despite recent scholarly attention to Reb gong *klu rol*, ritualized *lha ba* activity and dances in the context of Lo sar in Reb gong have been ignored. Ru zhol ma and Ru gong ma are Gling rgyal groups that held the ritual on the first day of the first month of the Chinese Lunar calendar. This presentation describes preparatory activities, rituals at Mag pa Shrine, and the Ru zhol ma threshing ground in the late twentieth century, illustrating that *klu rol* embraces certain dances and other activities that that are also performed during Lo sar.

KEY WORDS

Gling rgya, *lha ba*, Lo sar, *klu rol*, Tibetan, Qinghai

INTRODUCTION

Dpal ldan bkra shis¹ and Stuart (1998) discussed research on *klu rol*. Since that time, Epstein and Peng (1998) have written about *klu rol* in the context of ritual, ethnicity, and generational identity based on observations made in the villages of Sa skyil and Sog ru in 1994, Dpal ldan bkra shis and Stuart (1999) have published a short descriptive article² on Gling rgyal *klu rol*, an English translation of Xing (1998) has appeared, and Sadako Nagano (2000) has described Sog ru Village's *klu rol*.

GLING RGYAL LOCATION

Gling rgyal Village is located in eastern Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, 190 kilometers south of Zi ling (Xining), the provincial capital of Mtsho sngon (Qinghai), and approximately five kilometers south of Tho rgya (Baoan) Town. This area is known as Reb gong—an area including Tongren County, Rtse khog (Zeku) County, and southern Thun te (Tongde) County of Mtsho lho Tibetan

¹Dpal ldan bkra shis (b. 1971) is a member of Gling rgyal Village's Ru zhol ma group and has participated in the Lo sar *lha ba* ritual five times.

²This article features five color photographs, two showing the village's two *lha ba* performing during *klu rol*. The younger *lha ba*, who is usually possessed by A myes Mag pa, is shown performing on a threshing ground just prior to meeting the older *lha ba*, who is usually possessed by A myes Lha ri. The older *lha ba* (retired in 1994 from the *lha ba* position) is shown atop the *tog*, a pole atop which there is a *thang kha* of A myes Lha ri. One photograph features a boy atop the *klu sdong* or water deities' pole placed in the Ru zhol ma group's threshing ground.

Autonomous Prefecture. Rong bo (Longwu) was historically the political and religious center of Reb gong because of the politically important Rong bo Monastery. Tongren County is presently home to Rong bo Town (Tongren Town) where Rong bo Lamasery is situated consequently, Rong bo/ Tongren Town is often called Reb gong.

The population of Gling rgyal Village was 2,200 (320 households) in the late twentieth century. Most villagers cultivated wheat and oil-bearing plants. A number of families earned their livelihood through animal husbandry and also herded animals for village families who reciprocate by cultivating their cropland.

RU GONG MA AND RU ZHOL MA

Gling rgyal Village consisted of seven groups. These groups were geographically distinct and may be considered separate in terms of kinship relations. Two of the groups, Ru gong ma and Ru zhol ma, were also known, collectively, as Zhang bza' tshang (Zhang bza' Family/ Clan), and were one group in the past. They were located one kilometer apart. Collectively these two groups had approximately one hundred households and 600 members. They venerated the same mountain deities and jointly held mountain deity rituals. In addition, they shared the same *sngags khang* 'tantric hall', a small shrine where males of these two groups gathered and chanted scriptures on certain dates.

MAG PA MOUNTAIN GOD

Mag pa was venerated only by Zhang bza' tshang. Mag pa was thought to inhabit a mountain one and a half kilometers south of the village. The village's original mountain deity, he was thought to wear brown clothing and a wide brimmed

hat with a long red or brown fringe, to have no wife, to live a spartan existence, and to be more savage than A myes Lha ri, a mountain god worshipped by all Gling rgyal villagers.

Mag pa's shrine was adjacent to the Ru zhol ma threshing ground. Villagers beseeched him to protect their crops, livestock, and families and to ensure a life unmarred by evils and difficulty. He was thought to be unhelpful in obtaining a better reincarnation.

MAG PA *LHA BA*

In the early twenty-first century, the Mag pa *lha ba* (trance medium) was from the Ru gong ma group. He was selected in 1994 after the retirement of the former *lha ba* from the *lha ba* position. A Mag pa *lha ba* was selected from Nor brgya tshang (Nor brgya Family/ Clan) when a new *lha ba* was needed. Nor brgya tshang consisted of six families within Ru zhol ma. Males from these families were believed to have a propensity to be *lha ba*. *Lha ba* were never female.

RITUAL ORGANIZATION

Three families known as '*grig bdag tshang* 'discipline management family' were chosen from each of the two groups on a rotating annual basis, for a total of six families. They organized rituals and raised money from the groups' households to pay for these activities. The Lo sar *lha ba* ritual was their responsibility. They provided the *lha ba* with good food obtained from the groups' households and ensured that an adequate number of males participated.

PERFORMERS AND AUDIENCE

Each household sent a male to dance. Male villagers aged over thirty usually did not dance and female villagers, unlike during summer *klu rol*, were strictly onlookers. Villagers believed that, by participating in the ritual, they received Mag pa's blessing. If they did not attend, they believed that Mag pa might have been displeased and mishaps might have occurred to absentees and their families. Additionally, the ritual was a chance for children to wear special ceremonial dress and thus display a family's wealth, usually kept stored in chests.

The audience consisted of members from Zhang bza' tshang, as well as visitors with relatives in Zhang bza' tshang.

Traditionally, male and female audience members stood in a single circle, but never mixed. Females stood on the lower part of the threshing ground and males on the upper part. Monks and pious Buddhist laymen believed that mountain gods were worldly and that, at least for them, the ritual was sacrilege, and hindered the pursuit of sublime enlightenment; they did not attend. Certain female audience members prostrated to the *lha ba*; Dpal ldan bkra shis never observed a male prostrate to a *lha ba*.

DANCE INTRODUCTION

Klu rol (used here to mean 'ritual dances') originally consisted of seventeen different movements. In the early twenty-first century, only thirteen were preserved and were the same as those performed during summer *klu rol*.

PERFORMANCE PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

Late in the night on Chinese Lunar New Year Eve, a man from each household offered *bsang* to Mag pa at an altar in the courtyard of the Mag pa shrine. Mountain deities were considered sentient beings, living on odors. Offering *bsang* satiated and pleased them. Strips of silk and satin known as *snyan dar* 'victory banners', were hung on presents inside the shrine.

The Mag pa shrine was built on a platform in the courtyard center. Mag pa's statue was in the shrine center. Offerings made by Ru gong ma were placed on the right side and offerings made by Ru zhol ma were placed on the left side. The two groups competed to give the most offerings in testimony to their devotion to Mag pa. In front of Mag pa's statue, men also offered *mchod me* 'butter lamps', which stayed lit throughout the night.

MAG PA MOUNTAIN GOD SHRINE RITUAL

The ritual began at eleven a.m. on the first day of the New Year at the Mag pa shrine. Escorted by men from the '*grig bdag tshang*, the *lha ba* entered the shrine. By this time, participants and the audience had gathered around the threshing ground. Only male villagers entered the shrine to facilitate possession of the *lha ba*; they offered *bsang* to Mag pa, lit firecrackers, circumambulated the *bsang* altar, and tossed *rlung rta*, small square papers decorated with a horse in the center, above the burning *bsang*.

To further please Mag pa, consecrators offered such invocations as:

Wearing a brown robe and dwelling in a grand palace, Mag pa Mountain God, please deign to enjoy the offerings I prepared with your mountain deity

companions. May my offerings satisfy you and your companions. Please vanquish unexpected disasters on behalf of Buddhism and advance human beings' living conditions. Use your power to protect humans and harvests from diseases and storms. My mighty mountain deity, please guide me in realizing my ambitions without ignoring Buddhist doctrines. Please guide your poor subjects, ensure a bumper harvest, and be vigilant to benefit villagers and care for them as though they were your own children.

The *lha ba* stood before Mag pa's statue. His long, untied hair flowed around his shoulders and down his back. Males assembled around the *lha ba* shouting and beating drums to help him be more quickly possessed. The *lha ba* beat the drum held in his right hand and recited scriptures.

Once possessed by Mag pa, the *lha ba* handed his drum to a man next to him. He then poured three bowls of *chang zas* 'fermented wheat' from a bucket on the ground before Mag pa's statue. Next, he took the *shing rgyan*, two short wood pieces that make two halves of a cylinder. *Chang zas* glued the pieces together. The *lha ba* tossed the *shing rgyan* on the *chang zas*. If the *shing rgyan* remained glued together, the *lha ba* was accompanied by males out of the shrine to the Ru zhol ma threshing ground.

RU ZHOL MA THRESHING GROUND RITUAL

On the Ru zhol ma threshing ground each household sent a person to offer *bsang* on a large collective pile of *bsang*. Both males and females made this offering.

The performance traditionally included approximately one hundred boys and men, forming an outer and inner circle. However, interest in this ritual, as was the case for summer *klu rol*, had faded with time and

consequently, only about a dozen men and boys participated. *'grig bdag tshang* members danced in the inner circle and other performers danced in the outer circle. Two or three men beat drums and one man beat a gong.

Performers danced to the rhythm of these instruments while circling clockwise around the *bsang*. The *lha ba* normally danced inside the outer circle although he occasionally came out to oversee the outer performers if they danced reluctantly.

Onlookers stood outside the outer circle. Some females prostrated to the *lha ba* after he was possessed by Mag pa.

Halfway through the half-hour performance, the *lha ba* gestured to the performers' leader for a dagger with which to cut his forehead. The leader then danced face-to-face with the *lha ba* to encourage him to not cut his forehead. Later he gave in and gave the dagger to the *lha ba*, who cut his forehead with the dagger, wiped the ensuing blood away with his right hand, and flicked it into the air. Blood offerings pleased Mag pa.

At the end of the performance, the *lha ba* poured three bowls of *chang zas* on the ground as inner performers shouted and hopped. The *lha ba* tossed the *shing rgyan* on the *chang zas*. The performance ended if the *shing rgyan* stuck together. If the *shing rgyan* separated, the performers continued dancing, until the *shing rgyan* did not separate when tossed. Afterwards the *lha ba*, performers, and villagers entered the shrine.

CONCLUDING RITUAL AT MAG PA MOUNTAIN GOD SHRINE

At the shrine, the inner performers and the *lha ba* danced clockwise around the *bsang* altar. Inner performers were somewhat possessed by Mag pa's soldiers and danced to be

dispossessed. Two men held each other's hands with their arms outstretched. Inner performers danced toward the two men and jumped across their arms. Finally, the *lha ba* did the same to be dispossessed.

Female audience members stood in the lower part of the shrine courtyard. Males stood close to the shrine building. Villagers returned home after the *lha ba* was dispossessed, and the ritual was completed.

Historically, the retired *lha ba* gave an oration but the contemporary *lha ba* did not.

A MYES LHA RI *LHA BA* MOUNTAIN GOD LO SAR RITUAL

In addition to Mag pa, Gling rgyal villagers venerated several other mountain gods. A myes Lha ri, the protector of all Gling rgyal Village, was the most important one. Late at night on New Year's Eve, a man from each village household and the A myes Lha ri *lha ba* congregated at Dmag dpon sgang, the A myes Lha ri shrine, a kilometer north of Gling rgyal Village. Shortly thereafter the *lha ba* was possessed and offered *bsang*. Atop the *bsang* was placed *gnam lug* 'sky sheep', which was stolen from a neighbor village as punishment because, in the past, they had once invaded Gling rgyal Village's grassland. The sheep's chest was opened while the sheep was alive, the still-beating heart ripped out, and then placed on a table in front of A myes Lha ri's statue. Two men placed the sheep's carcass on *bsang* next to the central altar. This practice ceased in 2007.

Next, the *lha ba* told villagers how to protect themselves and their property from hostile forces.

At the ritual's end a man shouted, "*Gnam lo tshes byung!*" or "The New Year has begun!"

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NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Baoan 保安
Dpal ldan bkra shis དཔལ་ལྷན་བཀྲ་ཤིས།
Gling rgyal གླིང་རྒྱལ།
Huangnan 黄南
klu rol ལུ་རོ།
lha ba ལྷ་བ།
Lo sar ལོ་སར།
Longwu 隆务
Mag pa མག་པ།
Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྟོན།
Reb gong རེབ་གོང།
Rma lho རྩ་ལྷོ།
Rong bo རོང་བོ།
Rtse khog རྩེ་ཁོག།
Ru gong ma རུ་གོང་མ།
Ru zhol ma རུ་ཞོལ་མ།
Tho rgya ཐོ་རྒྱ།
Thun te ཐུན་ཏེ།
Tongde 同德
Tongren 同仁
Xining 西宁
Zeku 泽库
Zi ling ཅི་ལིང།

CALLING BACK THE LOST
na⁵³ mzi⁵³ TIBETAN SOUL

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ABSTRACT

A na⁵³ mzi⁵³ person falls accidentally and is panicked. The rə⁵³ hr̃⁵³ 'soul' leaves the body and the person becomes lethargic. It is nearly always the patient's mother who calls the soul back, if she knows the correct chant. Five thousand na⁵³ mzi⁵³ Tibetans live mostly in Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, PR China with Han and Nuosu (Yi). The ritual is commonly done for children less than ten years of age, though anyone may lose their soul. The chant is presented along with a brief discussion of na⁵³ mzi⁵³ cosmology and beliefs concerning the soul.

KEY WORDS

soul, soul calling, na⁵³ mzi⁵³, Namyi, Namuyi, Namzi, Tibetans, Liangshan, China

INTRODUCTION: dzə¹¹ qu¹¹
AND MU'ER 木耳 VILLAGES

We have introduced the na⁵³ mzi⁵³ people in some detail in a previous publication (Libu Lakhi, Hefright, and Stuart 2007) and will only provide a brief introduction here. The na⁵³ mzi⁵³ number 5,000 (Gordon 2005) and, while classified as Tibetan, speak a language within the Qiangic Branch of the Tibeto-Burman Language Family (Sun 2001:160). na⁵³ mzi⁵³ communities have been reported in Mianning 冕宁, Muli 木里, and Yanyuan 盐源 counties and Xichang 西昌 City of Liangshan 凉山 Yi 彝 Autonomous Prefecture, as well as Jiulong County 九龙县, Ganzi 甘孜 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan 四川 Province (Gordon 2005). Older, more traditional na⁵³ mzi⁵³ believe in a pantheon of local deities, have great faith in a local religious practitioner known as p^ha⁵³ tsə⁵³, and wear distinctive clothing.

dzə¹¹ qu¹¹ and Mu'er villages are the focus of this study. dzə¹¹ qu¹¹ Village is situated in Xichang City, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture. About eighty of the village's 600 inhabitants are na⁵³ mzi⁵³. Before 1998, females and older villagers went to Lizhou 礼州 Town on foot to shop while young men went by bicycle. In 2008, a motorcycle taxi could be hired in dzə¹¹ qu¹¹ Village for ten to fifteen RMB 人民币 for the forty minute trip to Lizhou Town where it was then possible to transfer to a bus (three to four RMB) for a thirty minute trip to the center of Xichang City. There were several mini-buses in 2008 that went directly from the village to Lizhou Town (two to three RMB). The bus travel took approximately one hour.

Mu'er Village is located in Lianhe 联合 Township, Mianning County. In 2008, there were eighty households of which twenty were Nuosu (Yi) and sixty were na⁵³ mzi⁵³. Villagers cultivated corn, wheat, and beans that do not require irrigation. Horses, cows, donkeys, swine, water

buffalo, and goats were raised. Certain families herded yaks in mountains relatively near the village.

In 2008, the village was experiencing steady depopulation as residents moved to the administrative centers of Lianhe Township and Mianning County, to do such businesses as operating restaurants and shops.

na⁵³ m̥zi⁵³ COSMOLOGY

Personal Account (Libu Lakhi)

I asked Mother¹ where our ancestors went after they died. She explained, "They live like us in the sky above. We can see the place where they live on auspicious days. At that time, through m̥⁵³ q^ho¹¹ bo¹¹ 'the sky door', we can see rape blooming and busy bees collecting pollen from the flowers. The ancestors can see everything we do down here. Every New Year they return and spend time with us. That's why we offer fresh food and liquor to them. Then they protect us from bad luck and illness.

Traditional cosmology divides the universe into three main parts: the earth (dby⁴⁴), an underworld (a¹¹ hī⁴⁴), and the sky (m̥⁵³). Earth is inhabited by people, who go to m̥⁵³ after they die. The underworld is inhabited by hī⁴⁴ sa⁴⁴ ŋæ⁴⁴, beings who can shake the poles of the earth and cause earthquakes.

m̥⁵³ is like the earth; people farm, work, and herd there, but they do not marry.² People live eternally in m̥⁵³

¹ mbz̥⁴⁴ m̥⁴⁴ b. 1943.

² Von Furer-Haimendorf (1952) divided Indian tribal concepts of the afterlife into two types: Hindic and hill-tribe. The latter vision of the afterlife is similar to the na⁵³

with their ancestors and wear long white traditional *hũ⁵³ ndzə⁵³* robes that are also worn by the deceased at their funeral. Local *na⁵³ mzi⁵³* believe that the deceased person takes those clothes, and animals slaughtered at the funeral with them to *m̥⁵³*.

m̥⁵³ has two doors: *ʃu⁵³ ɤa⁵³ kʰu¹¹* 'East Metal Door' and *ɕə¹¹ ɤa⁵³ kʰu¹¹* 'West Metal Door' through which the soul of the deceased must pass.

THE SOUL

A person is endowed with a *rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³* 'soul' at birth.

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ go to *m̥⁵³* to live after people die naturally, for example, from old age and not from violent deaths, terrible illnesses, or poison.³ In the case of a person who has died naturally, the family invites a *pʰa⁵³ tsə⁵³* to do the *pi'¹¹* ritual to lead the soul to *m̥⁵³* through the *tsʰo'¹¹ bo'¹¹ rə'¹¹ gɣ'¹¹*—the path that connects the places where the ancestors have lived.⁴

The souls of people who have died unnaturally wander the earth. There is no hope for the wandering soul; they are doomed to wander eternally, with no hope of ever going to *m̥⁵³*. Staying near where their corpse was burned or buried, they often unwittingly harm the living by causing illness and bad luck. The wandering souls move about in

mzi⁵³ concept in that after death, people continue an existence identical to their life on earth. However, often involved in the hilltribe concept of the afterlife is a succession of such worlds in which a person repeatedly dies and is born into.

³ For example, one might commit suicide by drinking poison after quarreling with a lover.

⁴ Libu Lakhi and Stuart (2007) describe the *pi'¹¹* ritual and related place names.

the wind, and are invisible in the daytime. At night, people may see them from a distance as dark shapes that vanish when people get closer.

It is believed that natural objects such as stones, plants, and animals can communicate with each other and with people, but it is unclear if this means they have a soul. In the past, the situation was reversed: people were stupid and the rest of nature was intelligent, as shown by this account:

Long ago, trees could talk to people. When people went to collect fuel, they didn't need to carry the wood back home, instead the trees walked back home, following the person's instructions.

One day, a person went to collect wood. The tree walked very slowly on the way back so the person said, "You are such a slow and useless burden, walk quickly."

The tree replied, "You walk quickly if you can, I cannot walk faster than this." The person was angry, cut the tree into pieces, and carried it back home. Since then, trees were no longer able to talk and walk, and people have to carry fuel home to make fires.

SOUL LOSS

*rə*⁵³ *hr̥*⁵³ *ma*⁴⁴ *jo*¹¹ *jo*⁴⁴ 'not with the soul' is a common expression used to refer to a living person being without their soul. Souls that leave the body have lost their willpower and are easily controlled by ghosts. Because of this, wandering souls are unable to return to their bodies unassisted; they require special rituals done at a certain

time. In contrast, souls residing in the body are energetic and self-controlled.⁵

Causes

This soul might be lost any time when a person is frightened, shocked, or falls down.⁶ The soul will then wander and, if it encounters a ghost, it will follow the ghost and play with it. Encounters with the souls of those who died violently are most common at crossroads and in places where the corpses of wandering souls have been buried or cremated.

na⁵³ mzi⁵³ in dzə¹¹ qu¹¹ and Mu'er villages believe that if a person is mature (over the age of about eighteen) then the soul is less affected by such frightening experiences and is less likely to leave the body.

Symptoms

Perhaps an hour after losing the soul, a person feels dizzy and nauseous. They might also feel sleepy during the daytime; at night, they may feel someone pressing on their

⁵ A dislocatable soul is also a common belief among Tibetans (see Yu 1949, Lessing 1951) and other Tibeto-Burman peoples. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1952) states that such beliefs are also common among the (predominantly Tibeto-Burman) hill-tribe peoples of Himalayan India and eastern Assam.

⁶ Desjarlais (1992) reported that soul loss for the Yolmo Sherpa of Nepal occurred when they were by themselves and frightened.

chest, making it hard to breathe. They talk in their sleep and generally appear to lack both physical and mental vitality.⁷

Treatment

The soul of the ill person wanders with ghosts and the ritual of calling the soul back must be performed so that the soul will leave the ghosts it is with. Most commonly, the mother performs this ritual. Losing the soul, if not addressed, may lead to serious illness and eventually death. If the initial treatment is unsuccessful, the mother may perform the ritual repeatedly, or the *p^ha⁵³ tsə⁵³* might be invited to do the ritual.⁸

⁷ Durrenberger (1975, 35) states that for the Lisu of northern Thailand (a Tibeto-Burman people), "If the soul should depart from the body, the person exhibits characteristic symptoms of anorexia, insomnia, bad dreams and general malaise." Liu (1995, 188-89) describe a case of soul loss among the Yi as follows: "She was dizzy, had a headache, and she felt pain all over her body but could not point out a specific place. She had no appetite... She could not bear alcohol when she was well, but she could drink liquor like water without being drunk when she was ill." Desjarlais (1992, 1111) described a case of soul loss thus: "He lacked an appetite, lost sleep, suffered pains" and in another paper (1989b) describes the symptoms of soul loss as insomnia, loss of appetite, and troubling dreams.

⁸ Chao (1999, 516) states that: "Prior to 1949, the Naxi, Chinese, Bai, Lisu and Tibetan ethnic groups [in Lijiang] each had healers who may be glossed as shamans. These practitioners were called on to cure illness, retrieve souls, perform divinations, and exorcise intractable spirits, usually ghosts or demons." See Rock (1959) for a description of several such practitioners and their roles.

THE SOUL-CALLING RITUAL

Two terms are used to refer to this ritual. The first is $rə^{53}$ $hĩ^{53}$ li^{44} $q^h y^{44}$ and is done by a $p^h a^{53}$ $tsə^{53}$. $q^h y^{44}$ suggests a sound employed to call chickens, pigs, horses, goats, and cats. The $p^h a^{53}$ $tsə^{53}$ calls the lost soul by chanting, which is considered formal and serious. The specialist occupies a higher position than the person with the lost soul; their religious authority is invoked to order the soul to return.

In dzə¹¹ qu¹¹ Village, the ritual is commonly done by the mother of the person with the lost soul, rather than by the $p^h a^{53}$ $tsə^{53}$. This ritual is called $rə^{53}$ $hĩ^{53}$ li^{44} $ndzə^{44}$. $ndzə^{44}$ suggests intimacy and kindness; the soul is being urged to return by the child's chief caregiver, the mother, who uses kind and gentle entreaties.⁹

$rə^{53}$ $hĩ^{53}$ li^{44} $q^h y^{44}$

The mother wraps her ku^{53} $pə^{53}$ $sə^{53}$ $sə^{53}$ 'hair braid string'¹⁰ around a bowl that contains uncooked rice and a raw egg in the shell that is vertically erect, supported in its upright position by the rice grains around it. The mother goes outside the house. It is considered best to walk to a place where two roads intersect or separate. When she arrives, she

⁹ Liu (1995) states that the Yi soul calling ritual is called *yilapo*.

¹⁰ The hair braid string is used for tying the ends of the hair together. Older women usually braid string with hair in two braids (an unmarried woman has one braid) and thus the strings are about a meter long. The older and more soiled the hair string is, the better it is for the purpose of calling the soul back because such a string is believed to have more of the mother's odor and thus be more attractive to the wandering soul.

sings in a high, soft voice, and continues to sing, summoning the soul, walking slowly back to the house, holding the bowl. Every time the mother passes a door,¹¹ the members inside call, "Already returned, already returned." Then the mother steps on the threshold and enters, all the while continuing to sing. She puts the rice bowl back on the *ga*⁵³ *ha*⁵³ 'the place where sacrifices to ancestors are made'.

As Figure One shows, *qa*¹¹ 'the hearth', is located in the inner middle part of the sitting room, and divides the room into two sections. The right side is for guests, while the hosts sit on the left. The hearth is dug ten inches deep into the floor and three *qa*¹¹ *lu*⁴⁴ 'hearth stones' are planted vertically around the hearth. The *qa*¹¹ *lu*⁴⁴ *a*⁴⁴ *mr*⁵⁵ 'mother of the hearth stones' is the innermost and largest one. The *qa*¹¹ *lu*⁴⁴ *a*⁴⁴ *zi*⁵³ 'the sons of the hearth stones' are the other two. The household mother's soul is believed to reside in the base of the mother's stones.¹² Thus, it is unacceptable for anyone to jump over the hearth or spit in it.

¹¹ The *na*⁵³ *mzi*⁵³ house has a large courtyard door, an inner courtyard door, and there are doors to the individual rooms that comprise the home.

¹² A local creation account describes a flood that drowned everyone except for a boy and his sister. The boy then goes to the sky, marries a sky maiden, and returns to earth but he and his wife do not know how to farm, build houses, or even cook. One day, a bat comes and after learning of their difficulty, returns to the sky to ask the sky maiden's parents how to do these things. The bat returns with the information, including the necessity of having three stones in the hearth for cooking. Nearly all *na*⁵³ *mzi*⁵³ in *dzɔ*¹¹ *qu*¹¹ Village cooked on the hearth fire until about 1990, when most families began building a spacious room for cooking on adobe stoves and also for storing firewood that fueled the cooking fires. No families in *dzɔ*¹¹ *qu*¹¹ Village used the hearth fire for serious cooking in 2008, although it was still

In order to make both the mother and the patient conscious of one another and of the ritual being performed, the mother pats the patient's shoulder after patting the *qa'¹¹ lu⁴⁴ a⁴⁴ mɿ⁵⁵*.¹³

Early every morning before most villagers have risen, and at dusk for a week, the mother does the same thing asking, 'Has X returned yet?', where X is the name of the patient.

On the night of the seventh day, the father digs hot ash out from the hearth and buries the egg inside, while all the family members gather around the hearth and wait, anxiously hoping for the egg to explode.¹⁴ When the egg does explode, all the family members burst into a high-pitched calling back of the soul in unison, while the father wraps pieces of the mother's hair-braid string around the patient's neck, wrist (boy's left, girl's right), and then the ankle (boy's left, girl's right). The *ku⁵³ pæ⁵³ sɿ⁵³ sɿ⁵³* is wrapped around five or seven times; the number of times cannot be even. The hair-braid string is left on and must not be removed; it should fall off on its own accord.

Next, the ill person eats the cooked egg. The rice in the bowl held by the mother is also cooked and then eaten by the patient.

Nuosu in *dzə¹¹ qu¹¹* and Mu'er also practice the *rə⁵³ hɿ⁵³ li⁴⁴ q^hɿ⁴⁴* ritual by inviting the *p^ha⁵³ tsə⁵³*; the mother plays no role when this is done.

used to roast potatoes and meat. The family sat at the hearth (see Figure One) when eating, and also the family usually chatted near the hearth when time allowed. During winter, a fire in the hearth provided warmth, which was an added incentive to sit near it.

¹³ It is also known as *qa'¹¹ lu⁴⁴ va¹¹ mɿ¹¹*.

¹⁴ Liu (1995) mentions the use of egg divination among the Yi but provides no details.

Personal Account (ge¹¹ dzu⁴⁴ ʒɪ⁵³¹⁵)

When I was a primary school student (and at the age of six), Mother and I were walking home along a path above a deep irrigation ditch after having visited a relative in our village. I suddenly fell into the ditch and was terrified. Witnessing me falling and crying badly, Mother worriedly examined my body for injury. I was uncomfortable with this because I was fine, only frightened. Then she put me on her back and carried me home.

I felt tired and uncomfortable that night. I neither wanted to eat nor do anything except sleep. When Mother saw this, she again asked if I was injured and tried to find some point of injury on my body. I didn't feel any pain and explained that I just felt tired and wanted to sleep. Her expression then suddenly changed. She ordered me to get up and told me to sit on a chair in the living room and wait for her. Next, she went outside and returned with a bowl that held some rice. A raw egg in the shell was in the middle of the rice. She then found and brought a mo⁴⁴ tsʰə⁴⁴ 'bamboo rice container', and covered it with a piece of my clothes.

Mother explained, "Your soul is lost and I am going to call it back with these things here. A mother usually calls her child's soul back because a mother is kind and when the soul hears the mother's voice, it will soon return. A mother finds the child's favorite things, such as food and clothes. For example, an egg is important for this ritual, because in past times when people were very poor, they lacked enough food; eggs were the best food. Gradually people thought eggs were everyone's favorite food."

¹⁵ Male, b. ~1988.

When she finished explaining, she began calling my name and ordered me to not fight with other children nor do other violent things for one week. She did the same thing every day for seven days. On the night of the seventh day, she cooked the rice and egg for my dinner. I fell asleep after I finished eating and felt better in the morning.

Personal Account (Libu Lakhi)

Mother, with my family members, has done the ritual many times for me. The most recent time was in 2003 when I had nightmares while at home. I also found it hard to breathe when I was dreaming. I felt like somebody was pressing hard on my chest. My parents discovered this, asked me what had happened, and I told them all the details. Father¹⁶ then asked me to sleep with him.

The next morning when I got up, I heard Father saying anxiously to Mother, "*Om*, there must be something wrong with the child."

"What's wrong?" Mother asked.

"Both his feet were as cold as metal all last night. A young man's feet shouldn't be like that. They are warm if he is healthy. I think his soul is not with him these days," Father said.

"Oh, yes. He also cannot fall asleep easily these days. There must be something wrong with him," Mother agreed.

"Please call his soul back in the early morning and again in the evening for seven days. I also think his soul is not with him," Father said.

¹⁶ li⁴⁴ bu⁴⁴ ʔ¹¹ pə⁵³, b. 1939.

Mother got up very early the next morning, before most other villagers, and called my name while holding a bowl half full of rice with an uncooked egg in the shell standing up in the rice. She called my name in a high, gentle voice, asking me to return. She mentioned all the places that I had been: Ganzi Prefecture, Xichang City, and Qinghai Province, where I had gone to study.¹⁷ She did the same thing at dusk after the village had become quiet.

All my family members gathered around the hearth on the night of the seventh day. There were

¹⁷ Oral texts describing such pathways and journeys are found among many other Tibeto-Burman peoples. Durrenberger (1975, 36) states that during the Lisu soul calling ritual "... male elders sang a song which describes the torment of the individual whose soul has departed and the means by which it had been returned... This song ... tells the story of the journey of a soul which has departed and has now returned ... the general theme of the song is set, the details are not." Mueggler (1999, 458) states that for the Lolop'o (Yi), "poetic speech is used to drive the ghosts of those who died of hunger, suicide, or other violence out of the bodies of their descendants and into the surrounding landscape. The ghosts are driven along a specific route through surrounding mountain villages. Their path eventually takes them down the nearby Jinsha river to the Changjiang (Yangtze). They make these rivers their steeds, riding them across the empire's breadth to the richly-imagined cities of Chongqing, Wuhan, Nanjing, Shanghai, and Beijing." Morse and Morse (1966) describe a Rawang chant from northern Burma. Desjarlais (1989a) reports on journey-based chants used in healing rituals among numerous Tibeto-Burman peoples of Nepal. Ellingson-Waugh (1974) describes 'musical flight' and journey-based oral texts in the Tibetan context.

around twenty-five people: my parents, brothers, sisters, sisters-in-laws, nephews, and nieces. Mother sat closest to the *ga*⁵³ *ha*⁵³, while Father dug out hot ash from the hearth with a metal spatula and scattered it by the hearth. He then buried the egg inside it. Father told me to sit on a wood stool near where the egg was cooking. We all waited for the egg to explode. It usually takes four or five minutes to explode, however, after about ten minutes nothing had happened and we all started to worry.

"It shouldn't take this long. What's wrong?" Father said.

"It should be OK. Let's wait a bit longer and see," Mother suggested.

It was so quiet that we could clearly hear the sound of the fire crackling. I started to worry when I saw everyone's red faces in the light of the fire burning in the hearth. If the egg does not explode, it is a bad omen indicating that the ritual will not have the desired effect.

Then, suddenly, the egg exploded. Everyone began calling my name at the same time. My niece Guomin 国敏, who was sixteen, said, "Uncle, return. Don't stay in valleys in the village."

Mother said, "Return. Everyone is calling you back. Return to your home and be with your parents, brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces."

Father then wrapped the hair-braiding string that Mother had wrapped around the egg earlier seven times around my neck, and also put a piece around my left wrist and left ankle.

I ate the egg after Father finished and Mother cooked the rice in a small pot for me to eat next morning.

THE RITUAL CHANT

Libu Lakhi explains:

I described above why and how Mother called back my soul in the summer of 2005. I felt concerned that this chant will soon be forgotten, since not many people any longer believe in the efficacy of ritual. They prefer to visit a doctor in the local township town clinic.¹⁸ I felt it is important to record this chant before it disappears and therefore I filmed my mother performing the ritual and then made the following transcription from the video.

1

[1]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ S back come

[2]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
mother LOC back come

[3]

a⁵³ da⁵³ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
father LOC back come

[4]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pBu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ɤa¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

¹⁸ There is a local clinic at the township town where a Han doctor sells western medicines.

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[5]

ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ bʒi⁵³ su⁵³ da⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo¹¹
dead GEN crazy GEN DAT NEG with

[6]

ræ⁵³ tʂa⁵³ ræ⁵³ bʒi⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁵³ zə⁵³
baby's soul hand NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[7]

gɣ¹¹ n̥i¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɣ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ n̥i¹¹
nine day road/way CONJ one day

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[8]

gɣ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɣ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
nine night road/way CONJ one night

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[9]

kæ⁴⁴ ndzə⁴⁴ tʂo⁵³ ko⁵³ tʰa⁵³ dzo⁴⁴
Ganzi prefecture LOC NEG EXT

[10]

rə⁵³ h̃i⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ le¹¹ hi¹¹ ka¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bʒi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[11]
tɕ^hiŋ⁵³ xɛ⁵³ siŋ⁵³ ɤo⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Qinghai province LOC NEG EXT

[12]
rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pɸu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ɤa¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[13]
ma⁵³ ja¹¹ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
mother LOC back come

[14]
a⁵³ da⁵³ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
father LOC back come

[15]
gɤ¹¹ ɲi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ tɛ⁵³ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹
nine day road CONJ one day

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[16]
gɤ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ tɛ¹¹ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
nine night road/way CONJ one night

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[17]

so⁵³ ɲi⁵³ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹
three day road CONJ one day

m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

- ¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
² ma⁵³ ja¹¹ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
³ a⁵³ da⁵³ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁴ rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ka¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁵ ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ bzi⁵³ su⁵³ da⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo¹¹
⁶ rə⁵³ tʂa⁵³ rə⁵³ bzi⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁵³ zə⁵³ m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁷ gɤ¹¹ ɲi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁸ gɤ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁹ kə⁴⁴ ndzə⁴⁴ tʂo⁵³ ko⁵³ tʰa⁵³ dzo⁴⁴
¹⁰ rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ lɛ¹¹ hi¹¹ ka¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹¹ tɕhĩ⁵³ xɛ⁵³ siŋ⁵³ ko⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
¹² rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ka¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹³ ma⁵³ ja¹¹ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁴ a⁵³ da⁵³ pæ⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁵ gɤ¹¹ ɲi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁶ gɤ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁷ so⁵³ ɲi⁵³ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

¹ lu tɕi,¹⁹ return

² Return to Mother's place

³ Return to Father's place

⁴ Return, don't separate from your soul and let your body
wander

⁵ Don't stay with dead, mad souls

⁶ Don't be in baby souls' hands; return

⁷ Return in one day if you are nine days away

⁸ Return in one night if you are nine nights away

¹⁹ lu tɕi = Liujin 六斤, Libu Lakhi.

⁹ Don't stay in Ganzi Prefecture²⁰

¹⁰ Return, don't separate from the soul and let your body
wander

¹¹ Don't stay in Qinghai Province

¹² Return, don't separate from your soul and let your body
wander

¹³ Return to Mother's place

¹⁴ Return to Father's place

¹⁵ Return in one day if you are nine days away

¹⁶ Return in one night if you are nine nights away

¹⁷ Return in one day if you are three days away

2

[1]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ VOC back come

[2]

ɲi⁵³ tɕho⁵³ te⁵³ ʂu⁵³ ɤa⁵³ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
East CONJ metal door LOC NEG EXT

[3]

ʂa¹¹ tɕho¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ɤa⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
West CONJ tree door LOC NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AMV back come

²⁰ Libu Lakhi majored in Tibetan-Chinese Translation at the Sichuan Tibetan Language School (四川省藏文学校) in Kangding 康定 from 1998-2002.

[4]

bi¹¹ jy⁵³ ɬa¹¹ jy¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
 temple monastery LOC NEG EXT

[5]

ɲi⁵³ tɕ^ho⁵³ ʂa¹¹ tɕ^ho¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
 East West LOC NEG EXT

m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 AVM back come

[6]

kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹
 male S CONJ male ghost hand

ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³
 LOC NEG EXT

[7]

mbzə¹¹ je te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹
 female S CONJ female ghost hand

ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³ m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 LOC NEG EXT AVM back come

[8]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³
 mother you back call CONJ

[9]

gy¹¹ ɲi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gy⁵³ te⁵³
 nine day road/way CONJ

ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 one day AVM back come

[10]

gɿ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɿ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
nine night road CONJ one night

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[11]

kæ⁴⁴ ndzə⁵³ tʂo⁵³ ɤo⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Ganzi prefecture LOC NEG EXT

[12]

a⁵³ pa¹¹ tʂo⁵³ ɤo⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Aba prefecture LOC NEG EXT

[13]

kʰa⁵³ tin¹¹ tʂʰen¹¹ ɤo¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Kangding city LOC NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[14]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ɤa¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[15]

jo¹¹ rə⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ɤa⁵³ te⁵³
self soul CONJ self EXT self body CONJ

jo¹¹ zə¹¹ m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
self EXT AVM back come

[16]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ m̥⁴⁴ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
 mother AVM you back call

[17]

a⁵³ da⁵³ m̥⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
 father AVM you back call

[18]

a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ ndy¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵
 elder brother younger brother elder sister

mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ m̥⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
 younger sister AVM you back call

[19]

tʂa⁴⁴ la⁴⁴ tʂ^hu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tʂə¹¹ xi¹¹
 relative in-law

m̥¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
 AVM you back call

[20]

kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹
 male S CONJ male ghost hand

ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³
 LOC NEG EXT

[21]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ɤo¹¹
 female S CONJ female ghost hand LOC

t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³ m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 NEG EXT AVM back come

[22]

kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ he⁵³
male S CONJ ghost language NEG listen

[23]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴
female S CONJ female ghost language

t^ha⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ he⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
NEG listen AVM back come

[24]

ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ te⁵³ lo¹¹ li¹¹ k^ho¹¹
dead GEN CONJ DAT back separate

[25]

dzo⁴⁴ su⁵³ te⁵³ mi¹¹ li¹¹ k^ho¹¹
EXT GEN CONJ down back separate

m̃¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[26]

p^ho⁵³ ho⁴⁴ te⁵³ li¹¹ xi⁴⁴ ndzu¹¹ ho⁴⁴
escape S CONJ release through S

te⁵³ ha¹¹ qv¹¹ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
CONJ mouse hole AVM back come

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

² ñi⁵³ tɕ^ho⁵³ te⁵³ ʂu⁵³ ɤa⁵³ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴

³ ʂa¹¹ tɕ^ho¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ɤa⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

⁴ bi¹¹ jy⁵³ ɬa¹¹ jy¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴

⁵ ñi⁵³ tɕ^ho⁵³ ʂa¹¹ tɕ^ho¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

⁶ kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³

⁷ mbzə¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

⁸ ma⁵³ ja¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³
⁹ GY¹¹ ɲi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gY⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁰ GY¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gY⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹¹ kæ⁴⁴ ndzo⁵³ tʂo⁵³ ko⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
¹² a⁵³ pa¹¹ tʂo⁵³ ko⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
¹³ kʰa⁵³ tin¹¹ tʂʰeŋ¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁴ rə⁵³ hi⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ka¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁵ jo¹¹ rə⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ka⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁶ ma⁵³ ja¹¹ m⁴⁴ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
¹⁷ a⁵³ da⁵³ m⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
¹⁸ a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ ndy¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵ mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ m⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
¹⁹ tʂa⁴⁴ la⁴⁴ tʂʰu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tʂə¹¹ xi¹¹ m¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
²⁰ kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ pʰu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁵³ zə⁵³
²¹ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁵³ zə⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴
da⁵³
²² kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ pʰu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ hɛ⁵³
²³ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ hɛ⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴
da⁵³
²⁴ ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ te⁵³ lo¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹
²⁵ dzo⁴⁴ su⁵³ te⁵³ mi¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
²⁶ pʰo⁵³ ho⁴⁴ te⁵³ li¹¹ xi⁴⁴ ndzu¹¹ ho⁴⁴ te⁵³ ha¹¹ qY¹¹ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³, return

² Don't stay at East Metal Door²¹

³ Don't stay at West Wood Door

⁴ Don't stay at temples

⁵ Don't wander in eastern and western areas; return

⁶ Don't let male ghosts control you

⁷ Don't let female ghosts control you; return

⁸ Mother is calling you back

²¹ When souls are enroute to the sky, they must pass through East Metal Door and West Wood Door. The Lisu soul calling chant recorded by Durrenberger (1975, 39) contains the following line, "The door of the land of the dead has opened and the soul is coming back."

- ⁹ Return in one day if you are nine days away
¹⁰ Return in one night if you are nine nights away
¹¹ Don't stay in Ganzi Prefecture
¹² Don't stay in Aba Prefecture
¹³ Don't stay in Kangding City; return
¹⁴ Return, don't separate from your soul and let your body
wander
¹⁵ Return with your soul and your body
¹⁶ Mother is calling you back
¹⁷ Father is calling you back
¹⁸ Brothers and sisters are calling you back
¹⁹ Relatives and in-laws are calling you back
²⁰ Don't stay in male ghosts' hands
²¹ Don't stay in female ghosts' hands and return
²² Ignore what the male ghosts say
²³ Ignore what the female ghosts say and return
²⁴ Separate from the dead souls
²⁵ Separate from the souls of living people, come down, and
return
²⁶ Be released while escaping through mouse holes and
return

3

[1]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ S back come

[2]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³
mother you back call CONJ

[3]

gɤ¹¹ ɲi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹
nine day road/way CONJ one day

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[4]
a⁵³ da⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³
father you back call CONJ

[5]
ɣ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
nine night road/way CONJ one night

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[6]
tʂa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tʂ^hu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tʂə¹¹ xi¹¹
relative in-law

m̥¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³
AVM you back call CONJ

[7]
kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴
male S CONJ male ghost language

t^ha⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ hɛ⁵³
NEG listen

[8]
mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴
male S CONJ female ghost language

t^ha⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ hɛ⁵³ m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
NEG listen AVM back come

[9]

ŋi⁵³ tɕʰo⁵³ te⁵³ ʃu⁵³ ɤa⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ɤo⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
West CONJ metal door LOC NEG EXT

[10]

ʃa¹¹ tɕʰo¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ɤa⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
East CONJ tree door LOC NEG EXT

m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

² ma⁵³ ja¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³

³ ɣɿ¹¹ ŋi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣɿ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ŋi¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

⁴ a⁵³ da⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³

⁵ ɣɿ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣɿ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m̐¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

⁶ tʃa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tʃʰu¹¹ ɿ¹¹ la¹¹ tʃə¹¹ xi¹¹ m̐¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ te⁵³

⁷ kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ pʰu⁴⁴ ʃə⁵⁵ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ he⁵³

⁸ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ he⁵³ m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴
da⁵³

⁹ ŋi⁵³ tɕʰo⁵³ te⁵³ ʃu⁵³ ɤa⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ɤo⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴

¹⁰ ʃa¹¹ tɕʰo¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ɤa⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m̐⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³, return

² When Mother is calling you back

³ Return in one day if you are nine days away

⁴ When Father is calling you back

⁵ Return in one night if you are nine nights away

⁶ When relatives and in-laws are calling you back

⁷ Ignore what the male ghosts say

⁸ Ignore what the female ghosts say and return

⁹ Don't stay at East Metal Door

¹⁰ Don't stay at West Wood Door and return

[1]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ S back come

[2]

ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ te⁵³ lo¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹
 dead GEN CONJ DAT back separate

[3]

dzo⁴⁴ su⁵³ te⁵³ mi¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹
 EXT GEN CONJ down back separate

m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 AVM back come

[4]

ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo⁴⁴
 dead GEN come CONJ NEG with

[5]

mbzi⁵³ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo¹¹
 female GEN DAT CONJ NEG with

m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 AVM back come

[6]

jo¹¹ rə⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ɤa⁵³
 self soul CONJ self EXT self authority

te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 CONJ self EXT AVM back come

[7]

ma⁴⁴ sə¹¹ sə¹¹ ma⁴⁴ ndo⁵³ ndo⁵³ su⁵³
NEG know NEG see GEN

[8]

ke⁵³ tɕ^ha¹¹ ke⁵³ xo¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴
market LOC

[9]

xo¹¹ pa¹¹ xo¹¹ lo⁴⁴ ɤo⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
river LOC NEG EXT

m̩⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[10]

t^ha¹¹ ræ¹¹ so¹¹ ro⁴⁴ ɤo⁵³
paper study LOC LOC

[11]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pBu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ɤa¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̩⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[12]

gɤ¹¹ n̩i¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ n̩i¹¹
nine day road/way CONJ one day

m̩¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[13]

gɤ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
nine night road/way CONJ one night

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[14]

so⁵³ n̥i⁵³ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ n̥i¹¹
three day road/way CONJ one day

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[15]

so⁵² ha⁵³ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
three night road/way CONJ one night

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[16]

kwi¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ zə⁵³
male CONJ male ghost hand LOC NEG EXT

[17]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ɤo¹¹
female S CONJ male ghost hand LOC

t^ha⁴⁴ zə¹¹ m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
NEG EXT AVM back come

[18]

n̥i⁵³ tɕ^ho⁵³ te⁵³ ʂu⁵³ ɤa⁵³ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
East CONJ metal door LOC NEG EXT

[19]

ʂa¹¹ tɕ^ho¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ɤa⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ɤo⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
West CONJ tree door LOC NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[20]
jo¹¹ rə⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ɤa⁵³ te⁵³
self soul CONJ self EXT SELF authority CONJ

jo¹¹ zə¹¹ m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
self EXT AVM back come

[21]
va⁵³ te⁵³ b̥zi¹¹ jy⁵³ ɤo⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Han CONJ temple LOC NEG EXT

[22]
na⁵³ te⁴⁴ ɬa¹¹ jy¹¹ ɤo¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ zə⁵³
na⁵³ m̥zi⁵³ CONJ monastery LOC NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[23]
ʂu⁵³ rə⁵³ ɣy¹¹ te¹¹ ʂu⁵³ rə⁵³ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵³
chain tie CONJ chain untie

[24]
zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣy¹¹ te¹¹ zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵⁵
grass rope tie CONJ grass rope untie

le⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
CONJ back come

[25]
kʰi⁵³ tʰo⁵³ tɕʰə¹¹ te⁴⁴ kʰi⁵³ tʰo⁵³ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵⁵
feet shackle tie CONJ feet shackle separate

[26]

la¹¹ t^ho⁵³ tɕ^hə¹¹ te⁴⁴ la¹¹ t^ho⁵³
hand shackle tie CONJ hand shackle

p^hə⁴⁴ le⁵⁵ le⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
untie CONJ back come

[27]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ a⁵³ da⁵³ m̃⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzɔ⁴⁴
mother father AVM you back call

[28]

a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ ndjy¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁴⁴
elder brother younger brother elder sister

mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ m̃⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzɔ⁴⁴
younger sister AVM you back call

[29]

tɕa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tɕ^hu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tɕə¹¹ xi¹¹ m̃¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzɔ⁴⁴
relative in-law AVM you back call

[30]

kwi¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³
male CONJ male ghost hand LOC NEG EXT

[31]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ɤo¹¹
female S CONJ female ghost hand LOC

t^ha⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
NEG EXT AVM back come

[32]

kwi¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ he⁵³
male CONJ male ghost language NEG listen

[33]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴
female S CONJ female ghost language NEG

ba⁴⁴ he⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
listen AVM back come

[34]

ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ t^ha⁵³ jo¹¹ jo⁴⁴
dead GEN DAT CONJ NEG with

[35]

mbzi⁵³ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ t^ha⁵³ jo¹¹ jo⁴⁴
crazy GEN DAT CONJ NEG with

[36]

ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ te⁵³ lo¹¹ li¹¹ k^ho¹¹
dead GEN CONJ DAT back separate

[37]

dzo⁴⁴ su⁵³ te⁵³ mi¹¹ li¹¹ k^ho¹¹
alive GEN CONJ down back separate

m̃¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[38]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ m̃⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁵⁵
mother AVM you back call

[39]

a⁵³ da⁵³ m̃⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
father AVM you back call

[40]

a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ ndjy¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵
 elder brother younger brother elder sister

mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ m̥⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzɔ⁴⁴
 younger sister AVM you back call

[41]

tʂa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tʂ^hu¹¹ ʏ¹¹ la¹¹ tʂə¹¹ xi¹¹ m̥¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzɔ⁴⁴
 relative in-law AVM you back call

[42]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pBu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ɤa¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
 soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 AVM back come

[43]

ʂu⁵³ rə⁵³ ɣy¹¹ te¹¹ ʂu⁵³ rə⁵³ p^hɕə⁴⁴ le⁵³
 chain tie CONJ chain untie

[44]

zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣy¹¹ te¹¹ zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ p^hə⁴⁴ le⁵³
 grass rope tie CONJ grass rope untie

le⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 CONJ back come

[45]

p^ho⁵³ ho⁵³ te⁵³ li¹¹ xi⁴⁴ ndzu¹¹ ho⁵³ te⁵³
 escape S CONJ release through S CONJ

ha¹¹ qy⁴⁴ m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
 mouse hole AVM back come

- ¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
² ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ te⁵³ lo¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹
³ dzo⁴⁴ su⁵³ te⁵³ mi¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁴ ʂə¹¹ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo⁴⁴
⁵ mbzi⁵³ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo¹¹ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁶ jo¹¹ rə⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ka⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁷ ma⁴⁴ sə¹¹ sə¹¹ ma⁴⁴ ndo⁵³ ndo⁵³ su⁵³
⁸ ke⁵³ tɕʰa¹¹ ke⁵³ xo¹¹ ko⁴⁴
⁹ xo¹¹ pa¹¹ xo¹¹ lo⁴⁴ ko⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁰ tʰa¹¹ ræ¹¹ so¹¹ ro⁴⁴ ko⁵³
¹¹ rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ka¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹² ɣɸ¹¹ ɳi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣɸ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ ɳi¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹³ ɣɸ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣɸ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁴ so⁵³ ɳi⁵³ rə⁴⁴ ɣɸ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ɳi¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁵ so⁵² ha⁵³ rə⁴⁴ ɣɸ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁶ kwi¹¹ te¹¹ pʰu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ zə⁵³
¹⁷ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ zə¹¹ m⁵³ li⁴⁴
da⁵³
¹⁸ ɳi⁵³ tɕʰo⁵³ te⁵³ ʂu⁵³ ka⁵³ ko¹¹ ko⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
¹⁹ ʂa¹¹ tɕʰo¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ka⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ko⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
²⁰ jo¹¹ rə⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ka⁵³ te⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
²¹ va⁵³ te⁵³ bzi¹¹ jy⁵³ ko⁵³ tʰa⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
²² na⁵³ te⁴⁴ ɬa¹¹ jy¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ zə⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
²³ ʂu⁵³ rə⁵³ ɣɸ¹¹ te¹¹ ʂu⁵³ rə⁵³ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵³
²⁴ zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣɸ¹¹ te¹¹ zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵⁵ le⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
²⁵ ki⁵³ tʰo⁵³ tɕʰə¹¹ te⁴⁴ ki⁵³ tʰo⁵³ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵⁵
²⁶ la¹¹ tʰo⁵³ tɕʰə¹¹ te⁴⁴ la¹¹ tʰo⁵³ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵⁵ le⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
²⁷ ma⁵³ ja¹¹ a⁵³ da⁵³ m⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
²⁸ a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ dɟy¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁴⁴ mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ m⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
²⁹ tɕa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tɕʰu¹¹ ɸ¹¹ la¹¹ tɕə¹¹ xi¹¹ m¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
³⁰ kwi¹¹ te¹¹ pʰu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁵³ zə⁵³
³¹ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ko¹¹ tʰa⁵³ zə⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴
da⁵³
³² kwi¹¹ te¹¹ pʰu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ hɛ⁵³
³³ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ do¹¹ ma⁴⁴ tʰa⁴⁴ ba⁴⁴ hɛ⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴
da⁵³

³⁴ sɤ¹¹ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo⁴⁴
³⁵ mbzi⁵³ su⁵³ da⁵³ te⁵³ tʰa⁵³ jo¹¹ jo⁴⁴
³⁶ sɤ¹¹ su⁵³ te⁵³ lo¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹
³⁷ dzo⁴⁴ su⁵³ te⁵³ mi¹¹ li¹¹ kʰo¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
³⁸ ma⁵³ ja¹¹ m⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁵⁵
³⁹ a⁵³ da⁵³ m⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
⁴⁰ a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ dji¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵ mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ m⁵³ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
⁴¹ tɕa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tɕʰu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tɕə¹¹ xi¹¹ m¹¹ nu⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴
⁴² rə⁵³ hi⁵³ tʰa⁵³ pɸu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ɛa¹¹ tʰa⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁴³ ɕu⁵³ rə⁵³ ɣ¹¹ te¹¹ ɕu⁵³ rə⁵³ pʰɕə⁴⁴ le⁵³
⁴⁴ zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ ɣ¹¹ te¹¹ zə¹¹ rə⁴⁴ pʰə⁴⁴ le⁵³ le⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁴⁵ pʰo⁵³ ho⁵³ te⁵³ li¹¹ xi⁴⁴ ndzu¹¹ ho⁵³ te⁵³ ha¹¹ qy⁴⁴ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³, return

² Separate the dead ones back

³ Separate the living ones down and return

⁴ Don't be with the dead ones

⁵ Don't be with the crazy ones and return

⁶ Return with your soul and your body

⁷ Don't be with those who are unfamiliar to you

⁸ Don't wander around markets

⁹ Don't wander in valleys and ditches and return

¹⁰ Don't stay in the places where you were a student

¹¹ Don't separate your soul from your body, and return

¹² Return in one day if you are nine days away

¹³ Return in one night if you are nine nights away

¹⁴ Return in one day if you are three days away

¹⁵ Return in one night if you are three nights away

¹⁶ Don't be in male ghosts' hands

¹⁷ Don't be in those female ghosts' hands and return

¹⁸ Don't stay at East Metal Door

¹⁹ Don't stay at West Wood Door and return

²⁰ Return with your soul and your body

²¹ Don't be in Han temples

²² Don't be in na⁵³ mzi⁵³ monasteries

²³ Untie the chain if you are tied with chains

- ²⁴ Untie the grass ropes if you are tied with grass ropes and
return
- ²⁵ Untie the shackles if your feet are fettered
- ²⁶ Untie the shackles if your hands are fettered and return
- ²⁷ Parents are calling you back
- ²⁸ Brothers and sisters are calling you back
- ²⁹ Relatives and in-laws are calling you back
- ³⁰ Don't be in male ghosts' hands
- ³¹ Don't be in male ghosts' hands and return
- ³² Don't listen to what the male ghosts are saying
- ³³ Don't listen to what the female ghosts are saying and
return
- ³⁴ Don't be with the dead ones
- ³⁵ Don't be with the crazy ones
- ³⁶ Separate the dead ones back
- ³⁷ Separate the living ones down and return
- ³⁸ Mother is calling you back
- ³⁹ Father is calling you back
- ⁴⁰ Brothers and sisters are calling you back
- ⁴¹ Relatives and in-laws are calling you back
- ⁴² Don't separate your soul from your body, and return
- ⁴³ Untie the grass ropes if you are tied with grass ropes
- ⁴⁴ Untie the metal ropes if you are tied with metal ropes, and
return
- ⁴⁵ Be released while escaping through mouse holes and
return

[1]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ VOC back come

[2]

jo¹¹ rə⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ɤa⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹
self soul self EXT self authority self EXT

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[3]

ma⁵³ sə¹¹ sə⁴⁴ ma⁴⁴ ndo⁵³ ndo⁵³ su⁵³
NEG know NEG see GEN

[4]

ke⁵³ tʂ^ha¹¹ ke⁵³ xo¹¹ ɤo⁵³
market LOC

[5]

xo¹¹ pa¹¹ xo¹¹ lo⁴⁴ ɤo⁵³
river LOC

[6]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pɸu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ɤa¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[7]

kæ⁵³ ndzə⁵³ tʂo⁵³ ɤo⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Ganzi prefecture LOC NEG EXT

[8]

a⁵³ pa¹¹ tʂo⁵³ ɤo⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Aba prefecture LOC NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[9]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pBu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hĩ⁴⁴ ɤa⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̩⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[10]

k^ha⁵³ tiŋ¹¹ tɕ^hɛŋ¹¹ ɤo¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
Kangding city LOC NEG EXT

[11]

tɕ^hi⁵³ xɛ⁵³ siŋ⁵³ ɤo⁵³
Qinghai province LOC

[12]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pBu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ɤa¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̩⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[13]

gɤ¹¹ ɲi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ tɛ⁵³ ti¹¹ ɲi¹¹
nine day road/way CONJ one day

m̩¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[14]

gɤ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɤ⁵³ tɛ⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
nine night road/way CONJ one night

m̩¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
AVM back come

[15]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ li⁴⁴ a⁵³ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ back Q come VOC

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
² jo¹¹ rə⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ jo¹¹ ka⁵³ jo¹¹ zə¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
³ ma⁵³ sə¹¹ sə⁴⁴ ma⁴⁴ ndo⁵³ ndo⁵³ su⁵³
⁴ ke⁵³ tɕa^{h11} ke⁵³ xo¹¹ ko⁵³
⁵ xo¹¹ pa¹¹ xo¹¹ lo⁴⁴ ko⁵³
⁶ rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pɸu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ka¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁷ kæ⁵³ ndzə⁵³ tɕo⁵³ ko⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
⁸ a⁵³ pa¹¹ tɕo⁵³ ko⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
⁹ rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pɸu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hĩ⁴⁴ ka⁴⁴ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁰ k^ha⁵³ tiŋ¹¹ tɕeŋ¹¹ ko¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
¹¹ tɕi^{h53} xe⁵³ siŋ⁵³ ko⁵³
¹² rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁵³ pɸu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ka¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m⁵³ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹³ gɸ¹¹ nɪ¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɸ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ nɪ¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁴ gɸ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɸ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m¹¹ li⁴⁴ da⁵³
¹⁵ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ li⁴⁴ a⁵³ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³, return

² Return with your soul and your body

³ Don't be with those who are unfamiliar to you

⁴ Don't wander around in markets

⁵ Don't wander around in valleys and ditches

⁶ Don't separate your soul from your body, and return

⁷ Don't stay in Ganzi Prefecture

⁸ Don't stay in Aba Prefecture

⁹ Don't separate your soul from your body, and return

¹⁰ Don't stay in Kangding City

¹¹ Don't stay in Qinghai Province

¹² Don't separate your soul from your body, and return

¹³ Return in one day if you are nine days away

¹⁴ Return in one night if you are nine nights away

¹⁵ Has lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ come back yet?²²

6

[1]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁵³ dʒy¹¹ o⁴⁴
 lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ S back come VOC

[2]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ a⁵³ da⁵³ ɲi⁵³ ndzɔ⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dʒy¹¹ o⁴⁴
 mother father ERG call back come VOC

[3]

a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ ndjy¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵
 elder brother younger brother elder sister

mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ ɲi⁵³ ndzɔ⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dʒy¹¹
 younger sister ERG call back come

[4]

tʂa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tʂ^hu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tʂə¹¹ xi¹¹ ɲi¹¹
 relative in-law ERG

ndzɔ⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dʒy¹¹ o⁴⁴
 call back come VOC

[5]

kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³
 male S CONJ male ghost hand NEG EXT

m̩⁵³ li⁴⁴ dʒy¹¹
 AVM back come

²² The mother asks and the family members answer, "Yes, he has come back."

[6]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³
female S CONJ female ghost hand NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
AVM back come VOC

[7]

ni⁵³ tɕ^ho⁵³ te⁵³ su⁵³ ka⁵³ ko¹¹ ko⁴⁴ ma⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
east CONJ metal door LOC NEG EXT

[8]

sa¹¹ tɕ^ho¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ka⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ko⁴⁴ ma⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
west CONJ tree door LOC NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
AVM back come

[9]

rə⁵³ hi⁵³ ma⁴⁴ pbu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hi¹¹ ka¹¹ ma⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̥⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
AVM back come VOC

[10]

gy¹¹ ni¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gy⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ ni¹¹
nine day road/way CONJ one day

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
AVM back come

[11]

gy¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gy⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹
nine night road/way CONJ one night

m̥¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
AVM back come VOC

[12]

kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ s̥ə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³
male S CONJ male ghost hand NEG EXT

m̥⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
AVM call back come

[13]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³
female S CONJ female ghost hand NEG

zə⁵³ m̥⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
EXT AVM call back come VOC

[14]

ma⁵³ ja¹¹ a⁵³ da⁵³ ni⁵³ ndzo⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
mother father ERG call back come

[15]

a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ ndjy¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵
elder brother younger brother elder sister

mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ ni⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
younger sister ERG call back come

[16]

t̚sa⁴⁴ la⁵³ t̚s̥^hu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ t̚sə¹¹ xi¹¹ ni¹¹
relative in-law ERG

ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
call back come VOC

[17]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ ma⁵³ pBu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ɤa¹¹ ma⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̩⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
AVM back come VOC

[18]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ back come VOC back come VOC

[19]

kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ʂə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³
male VOC CONJ male ghost hand NEG EXT

m̩⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
AVM call back come

[20]

mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ɤo¹¹ ma⁵³
female VOC CONJ female ghost hand NEG

zə⁵³ m̩⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
EXT AVM call back come VOC

[21]

rə⁵³ hĩ⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ pBu¹¹ lɛ⁴⁴ hĩ¹¹ ɤa¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³
soul NEG separate body NEG wander

m̩⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
AVM back come VOC

[22]

so⁴⁴ me⁵³ Bu⁵³ pæ⁵³ ndzu¹¹ li⁵³ dzy¹¹
three fire LOC sit back come

[23]

so⁵³ qa¹¹ lu⁴⁴ pæ⁴⁴ dzu⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
three hearth stone LOC sit back come

[24]

ŋa¹¹ tɕu¹¹ jy⁵³ k^hu¹¹ tɕ^hə¹¹ ʒi¹¹ pæ¹¹ ndzu⁵³
five CL home pole LOC sit

li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
back come VOC

[25]

jy¹¹ la¹¹ jy¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ qæ⁵³
sleep CONJ sleep CONJ tree bed

jy¹¹ li¹¹ dzy¹¹
sleep back come

[26]

ma¹¹ ɕə¹¹ qa¹¹ lu⁴⁴ pæ¹¹ ndzu⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
hearth hearth stone LOC sit back come

[27]

lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ back come VOC back come VOC

[28]

qa¹¹ lu⁴⁴ a⁴⁴ mi⁵⁵ ma⁵³ q^ho¹¹ to⁴⁴
hearth stone mother NEG lose

[29]

ŋa⁵³ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ ma⁵³ q^ho¹¹ to⁴⁴ m̥⁵³ ma⁵³ ja¹¹
I/my lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ NEG lose AVM mother

ŋi⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
ERG call back come VOC

- ¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ o¹¹ li⁵³ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
² ma⁵³ ja¹¹ a⁵³ da⁵³ nɛi⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
³ a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ dji¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵ mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ nɛi⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
⁴ tɕa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tɕ^hu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tɕə¹¹ xi¹¹ nɛi¹¹ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
⁵ kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ɕə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
⁶ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
o⁴⁴
⁷ nɛi⁵³ tɕ^ho⁵³ te⁵³ ɕu⁵³ ka⁵³ ko¹¹ ko⁴⁴ ma⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴
⁸ ɕa¹¹ tɕ^ho¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ ka⁴⁴ ko¹¹ ko⁴⁴ ma⁴⁴ dzo⁴⁴ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
⁹ rə⁵³ hɪ⁵³ ma⁴⁴ pɒu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hɪ¹¹ ka¹¹ ma⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
¹⁰ Gɣ¹¹ nɛi¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɣ⁵³ te¹¹ ti¹¹ nɛi¹¹ m̃¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
¹¹ Gɣ¹¹ ha¹¹ rə⁴⁴ gɣ⁵³ te⁵³ ti¹¹ ha¹¹ m̃¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
¹² kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ɕə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴
dzy¹¹
¹³ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴
dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
¹⁴ ma⁵³ ja¹¹ a⁵³ da⁵³ nɛi⁵³ ndzo⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
¹⁵ a⁵³ po⁵³ ɕy⁵³ ndji¹¹ a⁴⁴ ja⁵⁵ mə¹¹ mə⁴⁴ nɛi⁴⁴ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
¹⁶ tɕa⁴⁴ la⁵³ tɕ^hu¹¹ ɣ¹¹ la¹¹ tɕə¹¹ xi¹¹ nɛi¹¹ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
¹⁷ rə⁵³ hɪ⁵³ ma⁵³ pɒu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hɪ¹¹ ka¹¹ ma⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
¹⁸ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
¹⁹ kwi¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ p^hu⁴⁴ ɕə⁵⁵ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴
dzy¹¹
²⁰ mbzə¹¹ je¹¹ te¹¹ dzu⁵³ ma⁵³ la¹¹ ko¹¹ ma⁵³ zə⁵³ m̃⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴
dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
²¹ rə⁵³ hɪ⁵³ t^ha⁴⁴ pɒu¹¹ le⁴⁴ hɪ¹¹ ka¹¹ t^ha⁴⁴ bzi⁵³ m̃⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
²² so⁴⁴ me⁵³ bu⁵³ pæ⁵³ ndzu¹¹ li⁵³ dzy¹¹
²³ so⁵³ qa¹¹ lu⁴⁴ pæ⁴⁴ dzu⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
²⁴ ŋa¹¹ tɒu¹¹ jy⁵³ k^hu¹¹ tɕ^hə¹¹ ɰi¹¹ pæ¹¹ ndzu⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
²⁵ jy¹¹ la¹¹ jy¹¹ te¹¹ ɕə¹¹ qæ⁵³ jy¹¹ li¹¹ dzy¹¹
²⁶ ma¹¹ ɕə¹¹ qa¹¹ lu⁴⁴ pæ¹¹ ndzu⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹
²⁷ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o¹¹ li⁴⁴ dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴
²⁸ qa¹¹ lu⁴⁴ a⁴⁴ mi⁵⁵ ma⁵³ q^ho¹¹ to⁴⁴
²⁹ ŋa⁵³ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ ma⁵³ q^ho¹¹ to⁴⁴ m̃⁵³ ma⁵³ ja¹¹ nɛi⁵³ ndzo⁴⁴ li⁴⁴
dzy¹¹ o⁴⁴

¹ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ has returned

² [His] parents called and he returned

³ [His] brothers and sisters called and he returned

⁴ [His] relatives and in-laws called and he returned

⁵ Returned without being in male ghosts' hands

⁶ Returned without being in female ghosts' hands

⁷ Returned without staying at East Metal Door

⁸ Returned without staying at West Wood Door

⁹ Returned without the soul wandering separate from the
body

¹⁰ Returned in one day from a distance of nine days

¹¹ Returned in one night from a distance of nine nights

¹² Returned without being in male ghosts' hands

¹³ Returned without being in female ghosts' hands

¹⁴ Returned when parents called

¹⁵ [His] brothers and sisters called and he returned

¹⁶ [His] relatives and in-laws called and he returned

¹⁷ Returned without the soul wandering separate from the
body

¹⁸ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ already returned, already returned

¹⁹ Returned without being in male ghosts' hands

²⁰ Returned without being in female ghosts' hands

²¹ Returned without the soul wandering separate from the
body

²² Returned and sat beside the three fires' flames²³

²³ Returned and sat beside the three hearth stones

²⁴ Returned and sat under the home of five poles²⁴

²⁵ Returned and slept on the wood bed

²⁶ Returned and sat beside the hearth stones of the house

²³ The fire is divided into three parts by the three hearthstones.

²⁴ In the na⁵³ mzi⁵³ creation myth described above, humans did not know how to build houses and lived in huts built from tree branches. The bat explained to humans how to build houses using five pillars.

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²⁷ lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ already returned, already returned

²⁸ The mother of the hearth stone didn't lose

²⁹ My lu¹¹ tɕi⁵³ was not lost and returned when Mother called

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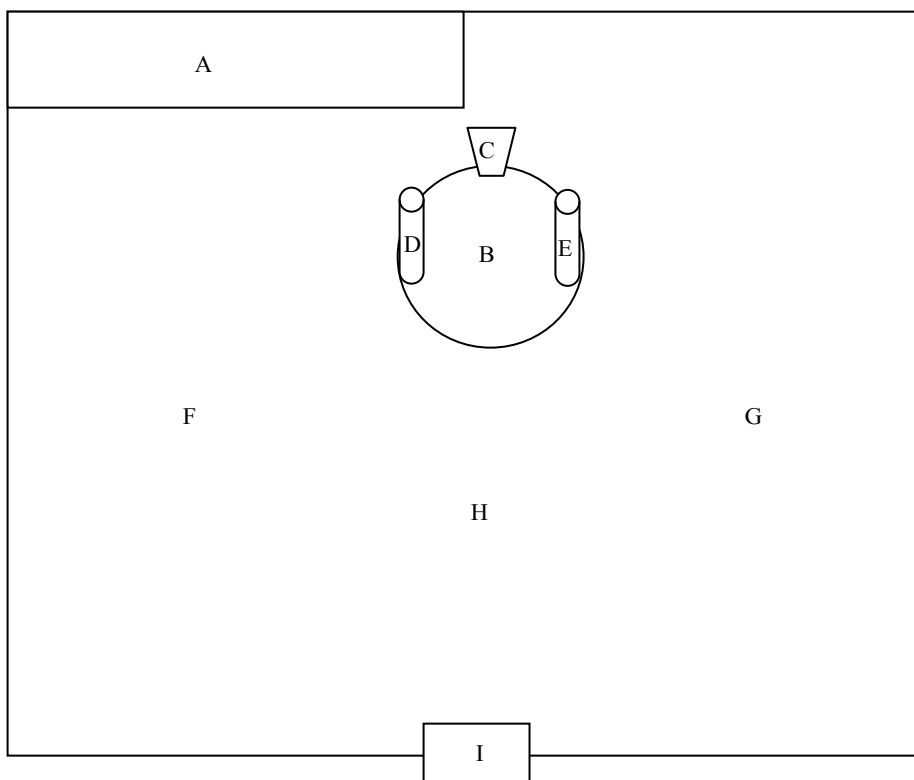
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Figure One: The hearth and hearth stones.

- A the *ga*⁵³ *ha*⁵³ 'sacrificial place'
 B the *qa*¹¹ 'hearth'
 C the *qa*¹¹ *lu*⁴⁴ *a*⁴⁴ *mi*⁵⁵ 'mother hearth stone'
 D and E the *qa*¹¹ *lu*⁴⁴ *a*⁴⁴ *zi*⁵³ 'sons of the hearth stone'
 F the *dzø*⁴⁴ *pB*⁵³ *ndzu*⁵³ *ro*⁴⁴ 'host seating'
 G the *væ*⁴⁴ *ndzu*⁵³ *ro*⁴⁴ 'guest seating'
 H the *mi*¹¹ *qa*¹¹ 'lower hearth area' where the family eats and dances when guests come
 I the *q^ho*¹¹ *bo*¹¹ 'door'



DYING HUNTERS, POISON PLANTS, AND MUTE
SLAVES: NATURE AND TRADITION IN
CONTEMPORARY NUOSU YI POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Themes of nature and traditional culture are common in the works of ethnic poets from a subgroup of the large Yi 彝 ethnic group of southwest China known as the Nuosu 诺苏. Nuosu culture is synonymous with the Liangshan 凉山 Mountains of southern Sichuan 四川 Province. Since the 1980s several dozen Nuosu poets have emerged to form what can be called the 'Liangshan School' of contemporary Chinese poetry. Drawing on theory from Ethnopoetics, Eco-literature, and Folkloristics the paper introduces major themes in the works of these Nuosu poets and introduces poems by three poets who distinctly utilize nature imagery from a common pool of Yi cultural traditions. These traditions include oral literature, ritual, folk costume, and traditional ideas about social hierarchy and gender relations. Much of the nature imagery is related to folk knowledge of native animals and plants. A major theme in the poetry is the response to changes in tradition and the local environment brought about by rapid growth and development in China.

KEY WORDS

Yi, Nuosu, Liangshan, Ethnopoetics, nature

INTRODUCTION

In this eco-conscious age, increasing attention is being paid to the relationship between literature and the environment (Garrard 2004). Eric Ball, in a recent issue of *American Folklore Studies* has called upon scholars to specifically investigate how local ethnic poets deal with native ecologies in their works, taking a Cretan poet as example (2006, 275-276; Bender 2008, 6). Such focus on local cultures recalls the Ethnopoetics movement of the late 1960s and 1970s, in which certain activist Western poets called upon urban-based, resource hungry populations to appreciate the traditional ecological wisdom of endangered tribal cultures as expressed in their oral poetry (Snyder 1977; Rothenberg 2002). From another angle, promoters of 'deep ecology' have also seen traditional cultures as sources of inspiration for sustained human living on the planet (Grim 2001, 54). Such endeavors, whether confined to translations and museum exhibits or linked to more radical agendas for change, promote the creation of global perspectives on the local, enriched by insights into the diversity of experiences from cultures and groups across the planet.

In Southwest China, the relation between humans and the natural environment is an especially important dimension of the works of ethnic Yi poets from the Greater and Lesser Liangshan Mountains (Da Liangshan 大凉山, Xiao Liangshan 小凉山) in southern Sichuan Province. The officially recognized Yi ethnic minority group (Yizu 彝族) numbers over six million, and is composed of dozens of diverse subgroups (including the Nuosu, Lipo 里泼, Nisupo 尼苏泼, and Azhe 阿哲) living throughout the mountainous areas of Yunnan 云南, Sichuan, and Guizhou 贵州 provinces, and the Guangxi 广西 Zhuang 壮 Autonomous Region. Following traditional subsistence patterns of agriculture and herding, the Yi have rich traditions of oral poetry and written verse (Li 1994; Bamo 2000; Zuo 2006).

Since the early 1980s, an increasing number of Yi poets—many of them Nuosu—have added their voices to the vast concert of poetic production in China today. A significant amount of their work displays elements of traditional culture and nature lore, often in contexts of concern over increasing cultural and environmental change. Evidencing this trend, a recent international conference was held in Meigu 美姑 County on the theme of traditional Yi knowledge and the environment, along with a smaller conference on the theme of nature in modern Yi poetry (Bender 2006).¹

The first half of this paper offers a brief introduction to poets of the Nuosu subgroup of Yi, and discusses the incorporation of traditional lore and nature imagery in their works. The second half examines examples of poems by three Nuosu poets, each with a unique style and vision. It is hoped this introduction will raise awareness of one of many local poetry "micro-environments" in China and offer new material for probing questions of literature and the environment in local cultures in China and elsewhere.

¹ The major meeting was the Fourth International Conference on Yi Studies, on the theme of 'Traditional *Bimo* Knowledge and the Environment'. Several papers dealt with eco-literary themes (Bender 2006). The smaller gathering, on the theme of nature and Yi poetry, was chaired by poet Aku Wuwu and resulted in a volume of conference papers entitled *Poetic Meigu* (Luo and Liu 2006). Many Yi poets, including Jidi Majia, as well as the internationally acclaimed poet/ novelist Wang Ping 王屏 and the present author were in attendance.

BACKGROUND ON POETRY OF THE LIANGSHAN SCHOOL

Beginning in the early 1980s a number of poets of the Yi ethnic group have emerged on local, national, and even international literary scenes (Li 2004).² Many of these poets are Nuosu, a subgroup of the Yi who live mostly in the Greater and Lesser Liangshan Mountains in southern Sichuan and parts of northern Yunnan (Harrell 2001, 81-103).³ Constituting a unique and largely self-contained literary micro-environment, the contemporary 'Liangshan School' of Chinese poetry involves several dozen poets, among them Jidi Majia 吉狄马加; Luowu Laqie 倮伍拉切; Ma Deqing 马德清; Bamo Qubumo 巴莫曲布嫫; Aku Wuwu 阿库乌雾; (Luo Qingchun 罗庆春); Asu Yue'er 阿

² I thank the Liangshan Culture Bureau, Xichang 西昌 City, Sichuan; Jidi Majia; Ma Deqing; Asu Yue'er; Aku Wuwu; Lu Juan 鲁娟; other Nuosu poets; and poet/ painter/ critic Liyuan Xiaodi 栗原小荻 (of the Bai 白 ethnic group) for input into this paper. Thanks also to Marston Bender, Fu Wei 付卫, Bai Yifan 白弈凡, and Wu Shan 吴姗 for help in various ways. Funding was provided by The Ohio State University Seed Grant program and a Fulbright grant. All translations of poems in this article were done by Mark Bender, with the exception of Aku Wuwu's poems, which were translated by Bender in cooperation with the poet.

³ A number of words in Northern Yi Romanization—based on the standard for Nuosu speakers—are used in this paper. The final consonants /t/, /x/, and /p/ are tone markers for three of the four speech tones in Northern Yi (one tone—a level tone—is unmarked). Thus, they should not be pronounced as part of the spelling. In certain cases in this paper, Yi words frequently used in English writings are given without the tone marks (such as *bimo*, *sunyi*, and *shuo ma*). See Bradley (2001) for more on the Yi language.

苏越尔; Eni Mushasijia 俄尼牧莎斯加; Sha Ma 沙马; Jimu Langge 吉木狼格 several very young poets such as Lu Juan and Asuo Layi 阿索拉毅; and Fa Xing 发星, a poet of Han 汉 Chinese background who writes on Nuosu themes (n.ed. 2002; Li 2004, 420; Bender 2005, 113-114).⁴

Formative influences on poets of the Liangshan School range from Classical Chinese Poetry to styles of Modern Chinese Poetry to translations of foreign literature. Ethnic Yi poets such as Wuqi Lada 吴琪拉达 (of Guizhou and Sichuan) and Tipu Zhibu 替朴支不 (of Guangxi) emerged in the 1950s and began exploring modern styles of poetry, often with folk themes. In the years after the disastrous Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), a new generation of Yi poets was stimulated by the emerging Chinese poetic currents of the time, in particular the 'Misty' or 'Obscure' (*menglong* 朦胧) poets of the late 1970s and other trends in the 1980s that combined nostalgia for the traditional past with exploration of new form and content. With the outstanding exception of Jimu Langge, who is associated with the 'Not-Not/' 'Non-ism' (*Fei-fei* 非非) group that formed in Chengdu 成都 in the early 1980s, most Yi poets have not been deeply involved in the various avant-garde poetry movements (Jimu 2002; Day 2005, 338; Day 2006; Dayton 2006).⁵

Besides single-authored collections published by a variety of local and national publishing houses, works of the Liangshan poets (and critical articles concerning them) them appear in journals such as *Liangshan Literature* (*Liangshan wenxue* 凉山文学), *Nationalities Literature* (*Minzu wenxue*

⁴ See References for works of some of these poets.

⁵ Besides Jimu Langge and in a different sense, Jidi Majia, other Liangshan poets that write somewhat more to the mainstream in subject matter and voice are Sha Ma and Lu Juan. For essays on current trends in Chinese poetry see Lupke (2007).

民族文学), various other local and national literary journals, journals of local universities and institutes, and unofficial collections and journals (such as *Yi Wind* [Yifeng 彝风]) printed at private expense. Many of the poets are employed in local culture bureaus in the Liangshan mountain regions and at ethnic minority institutes and universities in Xichang 西昌, Chengdu, and Beijing 北京. Conferences on Yi culture and literature sponsored by these entities are held regularly, at which many poets present papers. Informal gathering places include Yi-themed restaurants in Chengdu and one in Beijing, run by members of the Nuosu rock group *Mountain Eagle* (*Shanying* 山鹰). The 'Native Tongue Bar' (*Muyu jiuba* 母语酒吧), now in its second location, was opened in 2004 by a consortium of private Nuosu investors. The salon draws artists, poets, writers, editors, musicians, and *bon vivantes* of various ethnic backgrounds (though mostly Nuosu) and at times has a 1950s 'Beat-like' feel, regularly featuring budding Nuosu pop groups, occasional poetry readings, and lively drinking parties. In 2008, the Yi women's folk singing group *Amo Niuniu* 阿莫妞妞 (literally 'mother's youngest daughter'; also a folk tune) opened a similar gathering place called 'Three Women Bar' (*Sange nüren jiuba* 三个女人酒吧). There is a small but influential Nuosu community in Beijing which includes several well-placed officials, researchers, artists, dancers, singers, and writers. Several poets of the Liangshan School are involved in international outreach via the web, conferences, translations, exhibitions, scholarly exchanges and collaboration, and international travel. Nevertheless, the school is still largely a regional phenomenon, being a socially constructed expression of contemporary Nuosu culture framed within the concept of a greater Yi ethnic culture of southwest China.

Besides the detectable influences of modern Chinese-language poetry and translations of foreign poets, the most basic feature marking the poetry of the Liangshan

School is the strong imprint of Nuosu folk traditions. Despite increasing inroads of competing cultural forces, the traditional forms of expressive culture, including oral poetry, ritual, and material culture, are still powerful sources of theme, imagery, and inspiration shared and utilized explicitly or implicitly by virtually all of the Liangshan poets (Yu and Luo 2001, 37-43; Li 2004).⁶

Yet, with one major exception, all poetry written by the Liangshan poets is composed in Chinese.⁷ Like many other ethnic minority authors in Sichuan and other parts of China, Chinese is the language of choice for Nuosu poets due to it being the common literary medium for most of China—allowing comparatively easy access to literate readers and presses. That said, many Liangshan poets seem to write with a literate Yi audience in mind. As one poet put it: "I am caught between Chinese and Western poetry, yet a part of neither." Aside from being ethnically different than other poets in China, the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the Nuosu poets vary among themselves. Those from rural areas sometimes learn Chinese only in grade school. Others grow up in multi-cultural county seats, sometimes as the children of local officials, exposed to the 'other' tongue and culture at an early age.

Commenting on this situation, maverick poet Aku Wuwu, who writes in both Nuosu and Chinese, has argued that the poems of the present era are largely written by poets who are 'cultural hybrids' (*wenhua hunxue* 文化混血) conversant to varying degrees in both Yi and Han cultures.

⁶ See Harrell (2001, 183-189) for examples of traditional and emergent/ performative cultural display in regards to Nuosu ethnicity.

⁷ Dayton (2006) has recently discussed the usage of Chinese by three ethnic poets (Miao, Tibetan, and Yi) in his MA thesis, highlighting the work of the *avant-garde* Nuosu poet, Jimu Langge.

These poets are producing a sort of 'hybrid literature' that exists within the dynamics of rapidly changing and complex cultural contexts increasingly removed from traditional Yi culture and literature (Luo 2001, 57-58). Along these lines, Jidi Majia (2004, 175) has optimistically stated:

I live in a region where traditional and modern thinking, traditional culture and modern civilization are in sharp conflict and collision, creating an immense head of water which will, I think, propel my people into unprecedented change and enable us to turn out world-shaking literature.

In brief outline, the outstanding characteristics of poetry created by the Liangshan School are:

1. The ambivalent themes of ethnic pride and unique identity, as well as cultural loss, disorientation, and survival;
2. a pervasive, sometimes emblematic use of diverse local knowledge of Yi material culture that includes foodways, customs, and material culture;
3. references to Yi myths, legends, stories, folksongs, and folk performances;
4. the invoking of traditional rituals and images of ritualists and elders, particularly the literate ritual specialists known as *bimo*;
5. romantic portraits of vibrant young women and men that accord with traditional gender-based ethos of beauty and heroism;
6. portraits of hunters, herders, and country folk;
7. themes of ethnic group, family, and parents (especially mothers);
8. a great sensitivity to and identification with, the natural world of the Liangshan Mountains and human interaction with that world;

9. a realization by many poets that the natural world is changing (as is Yi culture) due to the pressures of economic development;
10. the creation of an individual, metonymic voice in which the 'I' tends to explore a 'tribal' or group vision rather than a solely personal one—in contrast to many more mainstream poets; and
11. a propensity to write from experience—whether that of everyday life, a remembered oral story, a momentary reverie, or dreams. The act of peeling a potato drawn from the coals, a sleeping figure in a felt cloak on the road, a dog bark in the night, a charm worn by a colleague at a conference, a few lines of song or story, may stimulate a poem.

In his studies of oral poetry John Miles Foley has employed the term 'traditional referentiality' to describe meanings that are often metonymic, that native audiences find in local oral traditions (1995). To a certain extent, meaning in the works of the Liangshan poets is also dependant on images utilizing insider or local knowledge. Metonymic images may depict one or a few individuals (hunters, herders, ritualists, singers, local beauties, etc.), or evoke emblematic items, attributes, or folk ideas of Yi culture (felt cloaks, rhododendron flowers, mouth harps, heroism and beauty, the colors white, black, yellow, and red, etc.), often in contexts set in, or related to a natural world that is a resource for human endeavors and sustenance, but lies beyond complete control. These sorts of culture-specific references can sometimes prove challenging to interpret. This is especially true for the works by poets raised deep in the traditional culture and who write in part for a similar audience. But the efforts required to dispel the occasional opaqueness can yield glimpses of a vision of a world in physical and spiritual immediacy with the natural

environment remote to many urbanites today, and distant even to many urban Yi.

Orientation to a world linked to nature by ritual and myth is a dimension explored by several poets. Underpinning the theme are the traditions of *bimo* priests who still regularly conduct the complex Yi funeral rites, and (as do *sunyi* shamans) hold rituals for ridding homes of malevolent ghosts and calling back wandering souls of afflicted persons.⁸ An important aspect of this poetics is the relation of poetry to maintenance of ethnic identity and transmission of tradition in relation to the culture of the 'ancestors'. In some instances mention of traditional nature lore is utilized to create a sense of place, immediacy, cultural depth, and continuity which, in poet Aku Wuwu's words, allows the poems to act as 'textbooks' that stimulate the younger generation to keep in touch with the old ways. The Liangshan poets often draw on traditional narratives such as the *Book of Origins* (Nuosu, *Hnewo tepyy*) as sources of mythic figures, specific rituals, details of customs, and knowledge of plants and animals (Bender 2008). This work, with both oral and written versions communicated by the *bimo* priests, relates the stages of creation of life on earth and the early history of the Yi tribes.

Many poems of the Liangshan School express sentiments of longing for a culture perceived to be removed from the poets by a shift to urban life or changes in Yi society fostered by the rapidly growing economy that draws many young people out from the mountains and brings in

⁸ A *bimo* is a folk priest/ tradition-bearer who reads and recites the traditional scripture written in Yi and conducts various rituals to deal with harmful ghosts, recall wandering souls, and so on. *Sunyi* are shamans who use drumming to enter trance states while conducting rituals dealing with lesser ghosts.

changes from the outside. The forces of change include decades of resource development programs which have pressured forest, water, and mineral resources in the Yi regions. The sense of a balanced relation with nature, though challenged and compromised by the forces of change, still lingers in some rural areas, and may continue as a theme in Yi poetry where it may serve as a spiritual force at once intimately tied to Yi identities and as a source of aesthetic power in poetry. In all, from many angles, it would be difficult to imagine a modern Yi poetry without the imagery of nature in relation to human society.

CASE STUDIES

In the paragraphs below I explore how three accomplished modern Liangshan poets—each from a different orientation—draw on traditional expressive forms and local knowledge of the environment to create their poetic works. Thick with cultural lore ranging from hunting practices and plant knowledge to customary behavior and ritual, the following poems illustrate many of the themes and characteristics of the Liangshan School of contemporary Chinese poetry.

Jidi Majia: Hunters and Prey

Born in 1961, Jidi Majia (Jidi Lueqie Majialage 吉狄略且 马加拉格) has described himself as "a shoal where rivers meet," who has received the "stamp of Han culture and the shadow of other foreign cultures" (Jidi 2004, 169). With roots in the Butuo 布拖 area of the Greater Liangshan prefecture, he spent part of his youth in the prefecture capital, Xichang. Early influences on his literary development were traditional poetic narratives such as

'Mother's Daughter' ('Amo hnisse', an emotional bridal lament) and stories from the *Book of Origins*. He also read ancient and modern Han Chinese poets, from Du Fu 杜甫 to Guo Moruo 郭沫若, and foreign poems by Elizabeth Barret Browning and Aleksandr Pushkin. At Southwest Nationalities University (*Xinan minzu daxue* 西南民族大学) in Chengdu, he was exposed to a wider world of literature and eventually found the works of Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, and other Central and South American, and African poets.

Soon after graduating with a degree in Chinese literature, Jidi began publishing Chinese-language poems in high-profile journals such as *Stars* (*Xingxing* 星星). In 1985, he published his first of several collections of poems and was soon established as the first and most influential of the Post-Mao Liangshan poets, his ground-breaking 'cross-over' works giving the Yi a contemporary voice within mainstream Chinese literary circles (Aku 2002, 346; Li 2004, 420-436). As his stature increased, his poems offered thematic and stylistic templates for other up-and-coming Nuosu poets, such as his childhood friend Luowu Laqie, as well as Asu Yu'er, Bamo Qubumo (known also for her work on Yi oral tradition), and others. In recent years Jidi was briefly the standing secretary of the Chinese Writer's Association, a vice-president of the influential All-China Youth Federation, and is presently a vice-governor of Qinghai 青海 Province. His works have been translated into Italian, German, Japanese, and English.

In his poem 'The Final Summons', Jidi explores the theme of tradition and change in Nuosu culture by means of a central human character—a hunter skilled at setting traps for leopards (Jidi 1992, 26-27). The images focus on the hunter as a dying breed—the last of his kind—a mountain man with skills that no longer fit the coming age, yet a man part and parcel of the natural world and dear in the collective memory of the local folk. The poem hints at

traditional Yi beliefs about the 'give and take' between humans and nature's bounty. Hunters traditionally begged their prey for forgiveness, and stated why they needed to take their life. Similar rituals also accompanied cutting trees. The poem suggests that as the hunter has killed many wild creatures, he is finally summoned to his own death, caused by a crossbow dart from one of his traps. Ironically, the most capable of hunters is killed by one of the very hunting tools that have sustained him. Portrayed as an emblem of traditional Yi manliness, the hunter is a man who walks both within the human realm and that of the wilds. He is at ease with the tools of the hunt and the ways of the forests and rivers and is also portrayed as an object of desire by Yi women, who sing of him in their folk songs.

The Final Summons

*"Unluckily, he was pierced through the breast by the last
arrow he set."*

—a recollection

Whether at dawn or dusk he always went to the hills
to hunt leopards, to hunt for the ancestors' greatest glory.
As his soul spoke to the forest, he placed there
hidden traps.

(To hear the mountain folk tell it,
in his youth his name was
married to the wind
and sent very far away
because of the
many leopards
he caught.)

A man of few words, his forehead was a rich diary of
living.

Only in that joyful, overflowing, stillness of a highland
lake,

did he with a low nasal pitch, did he with a deep-chested
pitch

launch a lengthy folksong, wending here and there,
making the hearts of those women quake,
incomparably flooded by heaving, billowing waves;
making the noses of those women tingle—a feeling
more brilliant than the evening cliffs.

Atop his skull was a vista of primordial deluge, of
shimmering images,

his brown breast full of wild nature and love's vistas,
there letting those women in the high plots plant
undying beliefs.

(To hear the mountain folk tell it,
at this time he was already old
but he insisted on going to set
a last hidden trap,
to take a leopard.

To hear the mountain folk tell it
that day as he walked towards the mountain,
it was just at dusk.

He, alone, pouring forth a song.
This time he really did go,
never to return.

Later, people discovered
he had died at the hidden set.

That last trap's dart had
struck him in the chest.)

Dropping down,
like an unfolding plain drowsing under the stars;
his open eyes allowing the Milky Way
to issue a bit of untranslatable language,
Now, let his death-wrought rest seem like
a tree standing atop a mountain peak;
Now, let those women who loved him seem

like sunbirds perching in that tree.
Thereafter the story of a real man
spread out from that mountain—
though fate, at times,
gives such harsh garments to wear.
(According to those mountain folk,
he really did die,
and in that place of his death,
after an unknown number of years,
a woman who later died,
was also cremated there.)

In regards to Yi culture, the hunter's death seems to symbolize a dying tradition. By the end of the poem the story of the man's life and death becomes manifest in the image of the mountain tree, suggesting that while the story may linger in the folk tradition, the Yi will no longer be hunters, some excelling in other livelihoods in an altered world. Thus, the connection of the Yi to the primal wilds seems to die with the death of the hunter, who would no longer hunt for leopards, for "the ancestors' greatest glory." While the poem is a reverie of regret over the destruction of the natural environment and a lifestyle to some extent still dependent on the resources of that world, the message is: leave the old ways behind in all but memory and imagination—for already much of tradition is residing there like the old tree on the side of the cliff. Thus nature is used as a backdrop for musings on social evolution.

In another of Jidi's several poems on the hunter theme, the poet draws on folk wisdom regarding the hunting of the fanged water deer (*Hydropotes inermis*; Nuosu, *le*; Chinese, *zhangzi* 獐子). Images of this once-common, antler-less species appear in many contemporary Nuosu poems and traditional literature.

Water Deer Call

*Following the bleat of the water deer doe,
the buck comes towards me;
at this moment death arrives.
—The words of an old hunter.*

I exhausted all my courage sounding
the bleat of the water deer;
blowing the sound of the doe.
My lungs were a condensed sea,
one nostril the Yangzi River,
one nostril the Yellow River.
The call made a sound like falling tides at dusk,
exposing unseen feminine light,
golden vapor silently floating,
so long, and so soft.
The tender, finely spun poem
seemed secretly married to that soft glimmer,
as if donning liquid raiment
that the buck feels in its skin.
But I am forever clear that
I am a male caller and
each tree leaf helps
me in the deception.
I wait as if having mistaken
the time of a meeting.
Jittery nerves turn to reverent calm
as the long gun barrel silently extends
and aims at the hesitant buck,
letting it walk into the trap.
Whereupon I take it into custody,
greeting the buck at the finality of its death.
When my calling and the
gunshot ended,
I seem to have glimpsed

sparse glimmers of female aura
embracing a world,
lighting it up so brightly.
I know not why, but my heart felt
a sudden blast of deep autumn wind,
like the winters of the north—that cold.
I ground the call to bits,
mixed with the blood of my lips,
then threw it to a place hidden
from other eyes.
To tell the truth
I nearly cried
and thought to fib,
fearing that those who love me would
know.

The poet conjures images of the country's greatest rivers, in one breath uniting north and south China in a world of animal visions raised on the quivering bleats of a call made from a folded tree leaf. The leaf, however, complicit in the taking of a life by the promise of renewed life in the mating ritual, is cast aside in shame, as the hunter waxed poet turns reflexive, catching a glimpse (imagined or real) of the quick line between life and death, as he allows emotion to enter an arena from which it is usually barred. As in many of Jidi's poems, introspection of self as poet proceeds beyond that of ethnic personae, a movement enhanced or enabled by imagery taken from both tradition and nature.

Aku Wuwu: Monkey Skulls and Poison Plants

Aku Wuwu, whose Chinese name is Luo Qingchun, was born in 1964 in a remote village in Mianning 冕宁 County. Raised by his mother and several sisters, he learned to

speak Chinese around age seven when he began attending school—which he reached by crossing a chain link bridge across the churning Yalong 雅砻 River. Singular among the Liangshan poets, Aku has created two corpus of poetry. One is several collections of poetry in Chinese, the medium used by other Liangshan poets. The other is a substantial body of works written in the standardized script of Northern Yi dialect (Nuosu) (Bender 2005; Aku and Bender 2006). These Nuosu poems, in particular, tend to be vortexes of culture-bound meanings permeated by myth, ritual, folk belief, and nature lore. His use of local knowledge goes far beyond highlighting ethnic awareness and combines explorations of self-within-tribe while probing into individual consciousness and being. At times the many references to tradition combined with his unique vision make his poems opaque, if not wholly obscure to cultural outsiders and even to some Yi readers. Moreover, there is only a small audience with high level reading abilities in Nuosu. Aku has often relied on oral performance to relate his Nuosu poems, especially readings of his famous poem 'Calling Back the Soul of Zhyge Alu' ('Ax lu yyr kut'; 'Zhao hun 招魂'). Several of his native tongue poems are included in children's textbooks widely used throughout schools in mountain communities where he occasionally holds public readings for semi-literate audiences. It is notable that no one has yet translated his Nuosu poems into Chinese.

On one level, Aku's use of tradition is intended to instruct younger generations in aspects of their heritage—reminders that though the present is changing, they have a past from which to draw spiritual sustenance. This feature, which parallels functions of the *Book of Origins* and other traditional Yi works, is especially prominent in ethnographically thick poems such as the aforementioned 'Zhyge Alu' in which appear unqualified references to many customs, rituals, supernatural beings, and plants and animals with mythical or cultural significance (Bender 2005, 123-

127). In a somewhat more transparent poem entitled 'Tiger Skins' ('La njy') he traces the uses and meanings of tiger skins through the generations of grandfather, father, and son—the latter "never having seen a tiger" (Bender 2005, 121-122; Aku 2008, 40) The motif of the tiger skin becomes a symbol of the loss of both the natural world and of traditional Nuosu culture.

Many of his Nuosu language poems, however, take on even more challenging tracks and re-cast traditional elements into fantastic landscapes of dream and imagination where the poet seems to adopt a 'catch me if you can' approach in deference to his muse. Among such poems is the highly autobiographical text entitled 'A nyut vap lot' ('Monkey Skullcap Dipper'). The poet delves into the recesses of childhood experiences in a prose poem that is hauntingly visceral, and sometimes almost whimsical:

Monkey Skullcap Dipper⁹

When a child, my muted, seventy-year old mother
tied a sawed-off monkey skullcap to my collar;
a delicate, crafted dipper,
just like a calabash.
It was like the little watch dog before the door
of my home, under the overhang out front.
Each day when out guarding crops or herding,
I would wear the skullcap on my chest for drinking,
so the water ghosts wouldn't harm me.
When others asked me
I didn't dare say—indeed, was unwilling to say that
it was a skullcap.
So I would say right away: 'Monkey dipper'.
This monkey dipper was my ornament by day

⁹ Wuwu 1998, 146-147.

and by night my bedmate.

For whatever reason (I could not know)
the fruits on the sour plum tree in front of my house
grew more sour by the year.

Gradually, among the children of my age,
the lovely name of my childhood was scooped away
by the monkey skullcap dipper,
'Monkey Dipper' taking the place of my real name.

At this time,
when a bird was caught in our family's trap
(there in a sunlit patch of brambles)
it always, mysteriously, escaped.

Gradually, month by month,
everyone with a mouth in the village
came to call me 'Monkey Dipper'.

As things came to pass,
even when my own family was chatting,
the name 'Monkey Dipper' would be spoken.

Meanwhile, when my dearest,
toothless grandmother,
was praising her grandson before neighbors and friends
the name 'Monkey Dipper' would slip out
—to be heard by me.

As for myself, I was a bit angry and
ran to the shadows behind the house and
looked at myself in the water to see
if I looked like a monkey dipper.

The longer I looked the more
I seemed to look like a dipper.

The deepest thoughts of mankind most probably come out
of dreams;

in the night sky of dreams monkeys were thirsty,
and I too, was thirsty.

In an instant I changed into a dipper
and scooped water from the monkey's body to quench my
thirst;

then in an instant the monkey changed into a dipper
and scooped water from my body to quench its thirst.
Awakening from the dream,
I discovered that the monkey dipper—
handed down from grandfather to father to son—
was the slightest bit moist.
Certainly, I thought,
this monkey dipper holds some spiritual power,
as by day it changed into a dipper to continuously follow
me about.
And by night it changed into a small boat that took me
constantly back and forth
between the worlds of monkeys and men.

The poem alludes to a number of Nuosu customs with an intensity seldom seen in the writings of other Yi poets, bespeaking the author's deeply rural roots. In recent conversations with Aku, now a professor of Yi literature at Southwest Nationalities University, he explained that the monkey skullcap dipper was a rare object reputed to have the power to scare off disease-bearing ghosts. It is associated with water and was sometimes carried for drinking when a person was in the wilds. It was said that the use of such a dipper could prevent the appearance of aggressive boils directly related to drinking bad water. Although reputed to be effective against ills of the wilds, dippers were not easily had as monkeys were among the animals taboo as game, in this case due to their human-like characteristics and their appearance in the *Book of Origins*. Anyone killing a monkey invited disaster brought on by ghosts. Thus, only the skull of an already dead monkey could be used for a dipper, though even this might invite questions. Today, monkeys are scarce as most are said to have been killed or carried off by outside traders.

In the poem the speaker recalls his childhood guilt over using the skull for his own protection. The reference to

the "muted, seventy year old mother" suggests the folk saying that

Shyp ci ddop ap ti; hxit ci va ap hxo.

At seventy, one cannot speak; at eighty, one cannot call chickens.

The saying holds the idea that persons over seventy have outlived their years and should stay out of the affairs of younger people, though in the poem the reference to seventy seems to be a child's recollection of an older than usual mother, and not a literal age. Longevity is not a virtue in Nuosu culture as it is among the Han Chinese, and persons thought to have lived too long may be considered as strange beings, e.g., in some cases a wife will elect to have a living funeral once her husband has died. Once her funeral is held, she lives in a sort of 'betwixt and between' state, her soul already in the land of the dead, but her physical body still alive. At death no ritual is held other than simple cremation.

The term *a nyut vap lot* 'monkey skullcap dipper' as used in the poem, was actually a made-up word by Aku Wuwu as a child and is not in the folk vocabulary, though some old people still recall the custom of dipper usage. Somehow, as the poem hints, the term became the speaker's childhood nickname and in the banter with his peers served to deflect further questioning on the origin of the skull (which was a family heirloom, now lost). Near the end, the line referring to passing an heirloom from grandfather, to father, to son is based on an old saying that goes

Pup chy hly bbyp lox; pat chy sse bbyp lox.

Grandfathers should hand down to grandsons; fathers should hand down to sons.

Thus, within the interstices of the highly clan-oriented Nuosu society, the image of the dipper in the division between natural and spiritual world becomes porous via the image of a portion of a living creature now imbued with a haunting, spiritual power that breaks barriers and mediates between time and space, dream and reality, the realm of humans and nature.

In the *Book of Origins* all living beings are said to be the children of snow—six sorts of beings with blood—the fauna (including humans)—and six sorts without blood—the flora. Wild plants, shrubs, and trees, cultivated plants, and plants used in rituals all enter the visions of the Liangshan poets. Plants that often appear in the poems include the sacred *yyrx yyr* grass, which is among the plants used in rituals of *bimo* priests; the lovely *shuo ma* (rhododendron) flower to which beautiful women are often compared; and the food crops of bitter and sweet buckwheat, potatoes, and a sort of edible turnip-like, native tuber (*vop ma*; or *yuangen* 圓根 in Chinese).

Aku Wuwu's embrace of dream and reverie is sometimes underlain with a current of rage, despair, melancholy, and cynical hope. Not content to see the Nuosu as isolated unto themselves, he regards their position in the mountains as a unique vantage point from which to comment on the vagaries of the wider world. In the following prose-poem he plunges deeply into the folklore surrounding an indigenous plant that grows in the Liangshan Mountains to project his vision of ethnic survival in a world of realpolitik. The poem is hardly transparent, and some knowledge of local botany is needed in the act of interpretation.

The subject plant, *ddu shyt*, grows at high altitudes and is known for its deadly poisonous root. The plant may be in the genus *Aconitum* that includes the poisonous monkshood, or the genus *Ariseama* that includes the Jack-in-the-pulpit. Both are poisonous medicinal herbs native to

southwest China and the Himalayas (Poling et al. 2003). Among the Nuosu, the plant is harvested and hung in the rafters to scare off ghosts. Those who search for the plant must chant a protective verse beforehand to ward off poisoning. It is said that when cattle eat the leaves, it improves their health. However, it is so poisonous that no other plants are said to grow near it and it is found only in rocky areas. Very tiny amounts, however, can be used to heal cuts or long-term wounds, though the herb must be applied around the wound, not directly on the wound. In the past, it was used as a poison against enemies. Hunters would also boil their arrow tips in a concoction of the herb.

In attempting to understand the text through the lens of insider knowledge, it is useful to understand that when *bimo* priests are sending off spirits to the other world there are three roads—one is black, one is mottled, and one is white—the former two must be avoided, and the white road taken. Acts committed in violation of traditional codes of conduct (or modern laws) that end in serious injury or death are considered black; those ending in a scuffle or minor injury are mottled; while those ending with constructive discourse are considered white. Thus, in this poem, 'black' is not just a color, but a degree of intensity in a negative direction, though in many instances the use of 'black' by Liangshan poets is highly positive, the name 'Nuosu' meaning 'black people'. Spirit and material existence are linked in the poem—if an ethnic group or nationality has 'poison', then there is no need to attempt to recall its wandering spirit (as is the Yi custom with lost souls). Without such a powerful poison—their unique cultural integrity—a people would easily be defeated and wiped out. Thus, a powerful 'Yi poison' is needed for the group to endure and develop on its own track.

Poison Weed¹⁰

Above our homes there are mountains. These mountains are
without renown, but
the poison *ddut shy* plant that grows there is famous. The
stem and leaves are a vibrant
green; its black root is deeply rooted; its flowers are like
rippling cascades. People
raise many cows and sheep; cows and sheep eat the leaves,
and flourish. People raise
honeybees; bees sip the plant nectar to make honey. We live
amidst the poison *ddut*
shy plants, the poison plants are our relatives. From ancient
times, we have been
married to this poison plant—down to today. So, for such a
long time, our true
descendants have become the true descendants of the *ddut*
shy plant. Their life has a
poison vapor within it; their bodies have a poison blood.
Their love and thoughts have
also a poison essence within, like a hidden spark burning—
down to today. The
intense blackness of its spirit; the intense blackness of its
spirit.

All the other plants growing around have nothing but
hatred for us. The hard
rocks above and below ceaselessly struggle with us.

Although we appear to be
humans, our bones are the bones of tigers. Or if appearing
to be plants—we are plants
of great poison. If the earth lacks us, then where would one
go to find a place
called 'Poison Mountain'? This *ddut shy* plant can not only
poison humans, but poison

¹⁰ Wuwu (1998, 45-46).

ghosts as well. Thus if we no longer exist, then those who
must eat poison to commit
suicide will not find it; those ghosts fated to be poisoned,
will not be poisoned. Human
history requires poison, just as an infant needs mother's
milk. Thus, in this world, if
there are no poisonous plants, it cannot be considered a
complete world.
Beneath the skies, the dark mountain trees become yellowed
body hairs; in the
midst of the heavens the clouds endlessly clash—more so
than humans do; brambles
ceaselessly entangle; every sort of idea rises endlessly like
steep crags. Yet in such an
age, we remain small and silent within the sockets of the
poison mountains. Though
the mountains may collapse and erode away, yet our roots
have deeply penetrated the
earth, our poison has saturated the ground; our roots have
deeply penetrated the rock,
our poison has saturated the stone. Thus, wherever the rocks
fall, our poison spreads;
to wherever the earth erodes, our poison spreads—this is a
very clear reality. If in this
world all material things are like us—the material body
poisonous, the vital spirit
poisonous—is there any need to call back the soul of this
world?

Lu Juan (Adu Axi): Voice of a Mute Slave

Lu Juan (Adu Axi 阿赌阿喜) is among the 'third generation' of younger Nuosu poets and her works have only recently begun to gain critical recognition. Born on 18 May 1982 in Leibo 雷柏 County, in the eastern Greater Liangshan

regions, her literary talents were recognized in middle school. Trained in both the medical and legal professions, she has published many poems in national and local poetry journals and won a national prize for new folk poets in 2004. *Indigo May* (*Wuyue de lan 五月的蓝*), published in December 2006, is her first book of poems (Lu 2006). As a child of the transitional 1990s, Lu's work is in ways more mainstream and unabashedly personal than the works of many more senior Liangshan poets and photographs of the poet in *Indigo May* depict her in both pop culture garb and traditional dress.

'Mute Slave' ('Ya nu 哑奴') is her most innovative and challenging poem to date (Lu 2006, 83-87). Registering in some degree her self-acknowledged debt to TS Eliot and other foreign Modernist poets, the poem combines themes common in the Liangshan School with techniques drawn from a broader range of contemporary Chinese poetry. In several instances, imagery is presented with no identifiable speaker, as if peering through a rippling lens of nutrient rich water, alternately hot and cold. This sense of portent ambiguity intentionally offers spaces for the reader's imagination to engage the text and fill in the blanks. For Nuosu readers, however, the blanks may be filled quite differently than readers without certain kinds of local knowledge.

In the beginning passage, for instance, reference is made to the traditional felt cloaks (*jieshy/ vala*) worn by both Nuosu men and women which have become emblematic of the culture. The *shuo hma*, referring to several varieties of rhododendron native to Sichuan, is essentially the Nuosu 'national' flower (and varieties of it are important among other Yi groups). The flower, often white in color and linked in the *Book of Origins* with speech and wisdom, is a symbol of women's beauty. (In Nuosu folk ideas physical beauty is seen as a source of women's power, as is bravery for men.)

A major theme in the poem is language and paralinguistic communication. Nuosu (Northern Yi) is a tonal language in the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan family—making it a cousin of the Chinese dialects, and also of Tibetan and Burmese (Bradley 2001). The language serves as a wonderful medium for a tradition of oral poetry comprised of folksongs, narrative poems, proverbs, and ritual chants. The imprint of this oral culture is felt strongly on the native tradition of writing, by which the *bimo* priests have for centuries recorded Yi traditions in five syllable lines of verse (Bamo 2000). Many ancient paper scrolls were lost in the Cultural Revolution, though some were hidden and preserved and are now in regular use. Today both the oral and written mediums of language are still vital, though urban youth are increasingly distanced from their mother tongue. The mouth harp, known as a women's instrument, is made of thin, pierced slats of bamboo, or sometimes flattened brass bullet cases. The slats are strummed before the open mouth and played much like a jaw's harp.

The poem also references common figures in Nuosu folklore. We hear of Coqo Ama 'cannibal grandmother', the wild woman of the mountains who sometimes disguises herself as a motherly figure and appears at mountain homes late at night in search of tasty children. The culture hero, Zhyge Alu, was born to a single mother who was impregnated by flying dragon-eagles. His exploits include shooting down the extra suns and moons that were causing an early era of global warming. Mention is also made of the Nuosu clan society that before the late 1950s was strictly stratified in classes of aristocrats, serfs, and slaves. Some passages also seem to allude to the many ancient migrations of Yi clans, the relevant genealogies of which are recited by *bimo* priests at virtually all rituals. This is hinted at in the lines 'Apu' to 'Ada' (that is, from 'grandfather' to 'father'). Common rituals include those held to call back wandering

souls that detach themselves from the ill and rites held for protecting family and clan against harmful ghosts. In the final passage, mention is made of a muntjac (*Muntiacus spp.*), which like the water deer, often appears in Yi folklore as a magical, shape-shifting creature.

Throughout the poem the poet evokes visceral images of the Nuosu traditions and the natural environment which are engaged from various perspectives. Most powerful is the reflexive casting of women's roles and agency within a traditional clan society which seems to be breaking at the seams under the pressure of unvoiced sources, some which may be internal, and some from outside. Dreams, reported speech, and a constant flow of images and sketchy narratives coalesce in the pregnant, paralinguistic voice of the imagined mouth harp through which the mute slave speaks. Sporadically echoing traditional *san duan shi* 三段诗 'three part poems', a traditional verse form often used in love songs, the poem begins on high (in this case a mountain top), then moves to images lower down the terrain that reflect the generalized world of humans, finally dwelling on images of individuals, in this case the silent passions of a young woman.

Mute Slave

*"Speak not a word of the guardian spirit's secret."
—a memory*

At dawn, descending the mountain,
a felt cape brushed the first *shuo hma* flower
this rough and
wild rhythm;
before I started to write
the first passage just fell
down

Relinquishing all grammar and vocabulary;
all the sacred scrolls you could find nibbled up.
When faced with invasion,
the mother tongue was
hidden within water buckets
hidden behind millstones
hidden within fireplaces
but there was no escaping, and now not a word can be read;
crushed like the foes of legend
Facing a great wild fire,
with ancient trunks crackling,
the recollections of ancestors dance around the flames.
Their faces are still clear in the mind:
A thousand hunters walk by
a thousand singers walk by
a thousand craftsmen walk by.
Shouting the names of those ancestors—
who replies? Does anyone reply?
The huge echo is unfathomable.
Traveling backwards in time
to witness it all,
to be shocked by it all,
able only to be silent,
only knowing how to be silent:
"Child wash your hands, and shut the door!"
Going forth amidst such subtle directives.
She was neither a grandchild of the crone, Coqo Ama,
nor a descendant of the hero, Zhyge Alu,
but rather one in the most unique blood line
outside that of the lords;
she grew at an imperceptible speed,
in that accustomed way;
unhurried, un-harried,
and by necessity, that
slow mode
of delivery.

This was the special way
of grandma's pregnancy,
and her way of telling it.
A king once said:
"Believe, please, in genius, patience, and long life."
As the *bimo* priest leans back against
an ancient tree
and wags a bell,
beginning to chant the scriptures
of the generations from 'Apu' to 'Ada',
I return to mother's womb
On that long road of the soul-calling,
the oft told background is
one of white snow piling up, naked branches falling;
the tribe's horses unreal
issuing along an ancient road
and even more remarkable
the endless multiples of perilous gorges,
the deep black of beautiful steeds
packing salt brighter than the snow,
and even more remarkable
the ninety-nine souls dead along the way,
the laments of ninety-nine women
recurring, one by one
Relinquishing all grammar and vocabulary,
imitating no sort of language.
The distinct scent of fire and
the brightness within hoof prints
incite unsought poems in my dreams:
"The sunlight strikes the mountain...
one maiden, three deer."
I remember but this, and forget the rest before dawn
Before I became a woman
I took out that part of the blood
that leaps wildly
and gave it to my Ada,

gave it to my older, my younger brothers.
I will forever guard the deep secrets of that language,
forever be a woman who tells no secrets.
As for after love in the wild mountains,
there was a barefoot man
holding a sheepskin flagon of wine, sound asleep
in front of a piece of 600-year-old stone,
like a woman dreaming of poems.
When men dream of women
they dream of breasts like moonlight
and hair like waterfalls.
Before a woman
sounds her mouth harp,
he thinks:
"Please let me die
within your sweet breath."
A woman, her body like a bow
awaits the moment
of the powerful shot,
then with eagle-like magnificence
disintegrates
as the cycle of silence and explosion is complete:
"To receive a satisfying end
you will need the 10,000 years of patience
by which waters smooth the stones."
Relinquishing all grammar and vocabulary
to enter a mouth harp, tears in the eyes.
"The loveliest thing in this world"
is when the mouth harp is playing,
when it is the only mouth of silence,
when it is the only expression of silence:
wild flowers bloom in rage, springs weep;
flocking sheep circle, songs echo back;
sickness bolts, disaster is averted;
life and death converse across bridges.
"To guard a person, is to guard all secrets."

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I am a woman with a mouth harp for a mouth.
The mouth harp is the overflowing sound of my breasts,
the mouth harp is my lovely little belly,
the mouth harp is my deep, silent abyss;
from the long road of monthly blood
to a glorious conception
the mouth harp vibrates its ancient lips
towards the muntjac leaping through the hills:
"I am all the silences' silence,
I am a woman who tells no secrets."

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PHOTOGRAPHS

The ground-breaking Yi poet, Jidi Majia.



Jidi Majia with two *bimo* priests, Meigu conference (2005).

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Aku Wuwu presenting prizes for native tongue compositions at a primary school in Liangshan Prefecture (2007).



Aku Wuwu reciting Nuosu-language poems at a cultural festival in Liangshan Prefecture (2008).

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Cover of *Tiger Tracks* (Lat jjuj), one of Aku Wuwu's Nuosu language collections (1998).



Yi women's folk singing group, Amo Niuniu, performing in a folksong and contemporary poetry event (2008).

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Lu Juan in pop culture clothing from her collection *Indigo May* (2006; used with author's permission).



Lu Juan in traditional Nuosu Yi clothing (from her collection *Indigo May* (2006; used with author's permission)).

THE ĚRSŪ SHĀBĀ PICTOGRAPHIC
WRITING SYSTEM¹

Sūn Hóngkǎi ² [translated by Mtsho mo skyid (Qīnghǎi Normal University) and Gerald Roche (Griffith University/Qīnghǎi Normal University)³ with an introduction by Thomas Roche (University of Sohar) and Gerald Roche]

ABSTACT

The Ěrsū are a Qiāngic people living in southern Sìchuān Province. A diminishing number of Ěrsū religious practitioners known as *shābā* employ a pictographic writing system described in Sūn Hóngkǎi's 1982 article that is the subject of this translation. An introduction provides background on Sūn Hóngkǎi and the theoretical framework he employs to describe the Ěrsū *shābā* pictographic writing system; additional footnotes and a map provide further context.

KEY WORDS

Ěrsū, *shābā*, Sūn Hóngkǎi, pictographs, Sìchuān, Qiāngic

¹ Sūn 1982a.

² 孙宏开

³ Mtsho mo skyid and Gerald Roche are grateful for the assistance of Keith Dede, Kevin Stuart, David Bradley, and Libu Lakhi. Any remaining mistakes are the responsibility of the translators.

INTRODUCTION

Sūn Hóngkai's description of the Ěrsū pictographic writing system is contextualized by introducing the author, his theoretical perspective (and certain translation decisions this required), the uniqueness of the *shābā* pictographic writing systems, and reviewing relevant literature.

Sūn, a graduate of Běijīng University, had had a career spanning more than fifty years in 2008. A scholar of Tibeto-Burman languages in China, he has conducted field studies on Qiāng 羌, Dúlóng 独龙, Nù 怒, Pǔmǐ 普米 (Primi), Ménbā 门巴 (Monba), Luòbā 珞巴 (Lhopa), Báimǎ 白马, Tibetan, Jiāróng 嘉绒, Nàmùyi 纳木依, Guìqióng 贵琼, Ergǒng 尔龚, Zhābā 扎坝, Ěrsū 尔苏, Mùyǎ 木雅, Shǐxīng 史兴, Róurào 柔若, and Anóng 阿侏 (Sūn 1987). Sūn's most significant project in recent years has been the editing of the forty volume series *New Found Minority Languages of China* (*Zhōngguó xīn fāxiàn yǔyán yánjiū cóngshū* 中国新发现语言研究丛书, Thurgood 2003, Chirkova 2006). In 2007, he was an affiliated fellow of the International Institute for Asian Studies, during which time he worked on a Trans-Himalayan database of Tibeto-Burman Languages. In 2008, Sūn Hóngkai worked in the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The current translation represents a fragment of Sūn's large corpus of work that included more than forty publications in 1987 (Sūn 1987). To better understand the theoretical perspective employed by Sūn, it is important to note that, typically, the world's writing systems are classified into three types. Daniels (1996) attributes this categorization system to Isaac Taylor who, in *The Alphabet* (1883), laid out the concepts of logographies, syllabaries, and alphabets in his description of the languages of India. A logography uses a graphic symbol to refer to a word, or more specifically, a morpheme. For example, 女 represents

the Standard Modern Chinese monosyllabic morpheme which can be written in Roman Letters as *nǚ*. Syllabaries consist of graphs representing a single syllable that, depending on the language, may contain a single phoneme, or a sequence of phonemes. For example, ࿊ represents the Tibetan syllable that can be written in Roman letters as *da*. Finally, an alphabet represents phonological structure on the level of the phoneme.

Gelb (1952) used Taylor's nomenclature to explain how writing systems evolve. In *A Study of Writing*, Gelb suggested a principle of unilineal evolution of writing systems, postulating that they evolve from logographies to syllabaries and finally into alphabets. Sūn's description of Ěrsū places it on a unilineal evolutionary scale based on the Gelb/ Taylor system. Sūn posits that Ěrsū is in an intermediary stage of non-writing, i.e., drawing, developing into a logography. Following Fù Mào'ì 傅懋勳,⁴ Sūn distinguishes two different writing systems: *túhuà wénzì* 图画文字 'pictographic writing system' and *xiàngxíng wénzì* 象形文字 'hieroglyphic writing system'. A pictographic writing system is characterised by mimetic representations without phonetic content. Conversely, the hieroglyphic writing system is characterised by the emergence of phonetic elements, is closer towards syllabary, and a step further away from simple pictures. *Shābā*, according to Sūn's model, is therefore important in representing a unique stage in the evolution of writing systems.

Shābā is also significant in using color as a meaningful unit. Certain Mayan glyphs (logographic and syllabic signs), employed until the sixteenth century, used shading (hatching and cross-hatching) to distinguish meaning (Marci 1996a). Hatching was also used on the

⁴ Fù received his PhD in 1950 from Cambridge University for his work on Lolo grammar (Fù 1997). He has also written on the Nàxī language (Fù 1944, 1984).

Rongorongo script of Easter Island, which is most probably an undeciphered syllabary (Marci 1996b).

In addition to the current article, Sūn Hóngkāi (1982b) has published 'A Brief Introduction to the Ěrsū (Tosu) Language'. Regarding non-linguistic data on the Ěrsū, we currently know of only two published articles. Both are by Wū Dá from the Institute of Ethnology and Sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Wū (2005) discusses the relationship between Ěrsū ethnic identity and writing system, exploring the way that Ěrsū writing in *shābā* and Tibetan differently construct ethnic identity. In a later article, Wū (2006) gives a general introduction to the contested nature of Ěrsū ethnic identity, focusing on the role of historical factors in identity construction.

All comments in the footnotes were provided by the translators.

TRANSLATION

The Ěrsū 尔苏 refer to themselves as əṽ suṽ. In the past they were called Xifān 西番. They live mostly in Gānlù 甘洛, Yùexī 越西, and Miǎnníng 冕宁 Counties, and Mùlǐ 木里 Tibetan Autonomous County in Liángshān 凉山 Yi 彝 Autonomous Prefecture, Sìchuān 四川 Province. In addition, they also live in Shímíán 石棉 and Hànyuán 汉源 Counties, Yǎ'ān 雅安 Prefecture, and in Jiǔlóng 九龙 County and nearby areas in Gānzī 甘孜 Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sìchuān Province. The Ěrsū population is approximately 20,000.⁵ Ěrsū living in different places refer to themselves differently. For example, Ěrsū in eastern Miǎnníng call themselves doṽcuṽ (Dūoxù 多续).

⁵ At the time of writing, i.e., 1982. However, Wū (2004) states that there were approximately 10,000 (sic) Ěrsū in 2000.

li¹zu¹ (Lìsù 栗苏) is used in Jiǔlóng, Mùlǐ, and western Miǎnníng. In Gānlùo, Yùexī, and Hànyuán, Ěrsū call themselves ə¹lsu¹ (Ěrsū), or pu¹ə¹zɿ¹ (Bùěrzī 布尔兹), and at times they say pu¹ə¹zɿ¹ə¹lsu¹ (Bùěrzīěrsū 布尔兹尔苏). People in Shímíán call themselves lu¹su¹ (Lǔsū 鲁苏). These different self-designations are dialect variations of the same name, meaning 'white people'.

The Ěrsū language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan Language Family, Miǎn 緬 Language Group, Qiāngic Language Section.⁶ Ěrsū dialects vary to the extent that if Ěrsū who speak different dialects meet, they can only communicate with difficulty. The Ěrsū language is divided into three dialects: eastern, central, and western.⁷ The eastern dialect (Ěrsū Dialect) is spoken by approximately 13,000 people in Gānlùo, Yùexī, Hànyuán, and Shímíán. The central (Dūoxù) dialect is spoken by approximately 3,000 people in the east of Miǎnníng County. The western (Lìsù) dialect is spoken by approximately 4,000 people in Mùlǐ, Jiǔlóng, and the west of Miǎnníng County.

Most Ěrsū currently read and write Chinese. Several Ěrsū teachers have studied Yí.⁸ Before the founding of the

⁶ Gordon (2005) gives the following ISO-639-3 code for the Ěrsū language: ers. The linguistic lineage given is as follows: Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Tangut-Qiāng, Qiāngic.

⁷ Gordon (2005) suggests that the Menia/ Menya variety of Ěrsū may also be a separate dialect. It is possible that, but unclear if, the terms Menia/ Menya refer to Miǎnníng and if so where in Miǎnníng County this separate dialect occurs.

⁸ For an overview of Yí writing systems, see Bradley (2005). The extent and nature of the usage of Yí are unclear.

People's Republic of China, a few people known as *ṣu'va'* (Shūfá'ěr 书伐尔) studied Tibetan.⁹

In such northern Sichuān Province areas as Gānlùò, Hànyuán, Miǎnníng, and Shímíán, we discovered valuable examples of a colored pictographic writing system used by *shābā* 沙巴 (religious specialists). Apart from the *shābā* scriptures, we also learned from local people that there are many other kinds of texts written in the *shābā* pictographic writing system [hereafter SPWS]. Presently, names of some of the texts are still remembered. The scriptures we saw are *nəolma'ṣṣi'ṭa'* (Nüemànshǐdá 虐曼史答), *ko'ṭs'i'ṣṣi'ṭa'* (Gèqíshǐdá 各齐史答), *ṣṣi'p'a'ṭ ndṣo'ṭ ndzṣi'* (Shǐpàzhúozī 史帕卓兹), and *tṣ'a'ṭnba'ṭṣua'ṭa'* (Chāngbā'ěrshuādá 昌巴尔刷答). These books are mostly concerned with primitive religion and are valuable data for studying minority history 民族史, ethnology 民族学, minority languages 民族语言, and primitive religion 原始宗教. In particular, these books provide a valuable resource for studying the development of writing systems. Moreover, the *shābā* pictographs are somewhat similar to the Nàxī Dōngbā writing system.¹⁰

SPWS is not known to have a specific time of origin;¹¹ nor does Ērsū folklore agree on a time of origin. Some Ērsū say that SPWS has a history of no more than ten generations, whilst others say that it has a history spanning several tens of generations. Others say that SPWS existed during the time of Zhūgě Liàng.¹² One account states that

⁹ The original text is unclear on this point. These people were most likely religious practitioners, almost certainly males.

¹⁰ The ISO 693-3 code for the Nàxī language is nbf (Gordon 2005).

¹¹ That is, its time of origin is not given in written (Chinese) historical records.

¹² Zhūgě Liàng 诸葛亮 (181–234) was a political and military figure of the Three Kingdoms era (ca. 184–280).

Zhū carried books written in SPWS on horseback when he was in battle. When Zhū lost the battle, he scattered the books,¹³ of which only a few have survived. In analyzing these *shābā* books from the view of graphic analysis and religion, and also according to the similarities between *shābā* and Dōngbā writing systems in their formation and structure, we presume that SPWS originated at around the same time as the Dōngbā, or perhaps slightly more recently than Dōngbā.¹⁴

Ėrsū call SPWS *ndza+ra+ma* (Zhālāmǎ 扎拉玛). SPWS is only hand-written,¹⁵ mostly with a bamboo brush or animal hairs dipped into inks of different colors. The books we have seen were written in red, yellow, blue, white, black, and green. Interestingly, the different colors give different meanings to a single glyph. For example, if the pictograph 'stars and moon' is written in black it means 'dim' or 'not brilliant'. On the other hand, if the same pictograph is shown in white, it means 'shining' and is considered an auspicious symbol.

SPWS has basically already separated itself from the manners of drawing and entered the ranks of writing systems. Some important features are:

1. Even though more or fewer strokes are used, the basic written form of each pictograph remains the same. In

¹³ Presumably to save them from falling into enemy hands.

¹⁴ Goodman (2000), without citing sources or providing evidence, states that the Dōngbā script is thought to have originated ca. 1100 AD. Rock (1947) citing interviews with Nàxī Dōngbā practitioners, places the script's origin in the thirteenth century. Jackson (1971) brings the date forward even further, after 1590, but probably not becoming widespread until after 1723. Jackson's theory is based primarily on ethnological and historical reconstruction.

¹⁵ That is, it is not printed or mass-produced.

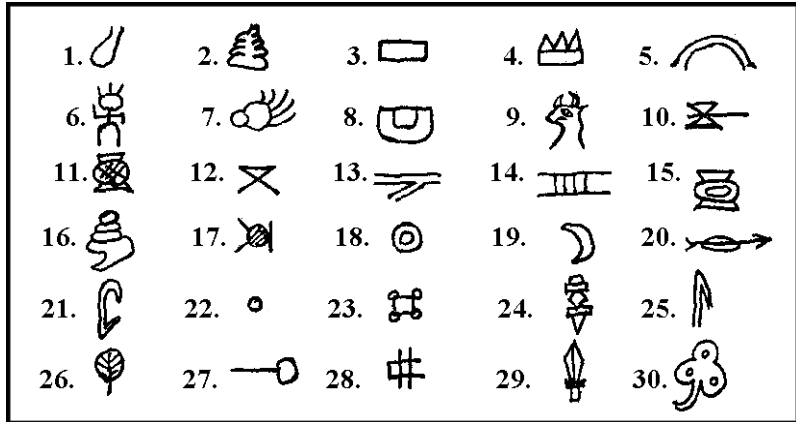
other words, the relationship between form and meaning is fixed.

2. Though SPWS can only be understood by *shābā*, and despite the fact that the books are distributed throughout a large area, pictographs with a single meaning have a consistent form and manner of reading.¹⁶ In addition, the content of books found in Gānlùo, Hànyuán, Shímíán, and certain other counties are all very similar. Furthermore, we learned that the *shābā* rarely met one another in the past. Nonetheless, the interpretation and pronunciation of the *shābā* pictographs are almost the same. SPWS has been transmitted across generations and copies have been made. It has a certain social standing. There are clear standards for how to write and interpret the script; it is not just an individual's arbitrary creation.
3. *Shābā* do not simply draw anything they see. From the creation of SPWS until the founding of the People's Republic of China we can see that its development must have been very slow and the number of single-formed (*dútǐzì* 独体字) words is invariably limited within a definite scope. From the books we have seen (and the following figure is from an as yet incomplete survey) there are over 200 single-formed words. Nonetheless, the documents that can be produced are incredible. The scripture called 𐎧𐎠𐎡𐎣𐎤𐎥𐎦𐎧𐎨𐎩 contains around 360 different composite diagrams each containing several single-formed words.

SPWS is quite primitive; from the point of view of its expressed content and its range of use, its limitations are

¹⁶ That is, the *shābā* script does not vary greatly from place to place in form or in the way the texts are read.

evident. From the point of view of the structure of the graphs, the objective content being described and the representational forms used are very similar, which means that the written language itself is still like pictures. See the examples below:



1. [hkeɽnuɑɽ] A leather pouch.	2. [htuɑɽk'uɽ] A flame.	3. [tɕiɽpaɽ] A chopping board or a wood plank.
4. [ntɕ'oɽpaɽ] A food tray.	5. [dziɽ] A bridge.	6. [vaɽɽtɕ'aɽ] A slave who became a ghost.
7. [jaɽwaɽ] A religious instrument resembling a human hand. ¹⁷	8. [zuɽ] A cage for demons.	9. [ɲuaɽɽ] A cow/ bull.

¹⁷ It is unclear what this implement is, who uses it, how, why, when, and where it is used.

10. [vu]ts'ua ¹ An ax.	11. [sa]ti ¹ pu ¹ nba ¹ Decorated pottery jar for alcohol.	12. [hto]ts'ε ¹ A tripod used by religious specialists in rituals. ¹⁸
13. [zɿ]ka ¹ tsa ¹ A fork in the road.	14. [tsua]ja ¹ A stretcher used to carry corpses.	15. [p'ε]ngu ¹ A household container.
16. [ə ¹]bε ¹ A white conch used in religious rituals.	17. [psɿ]ma ¹ A frog.	18. [no]ma ¹ The sun.
19. [ɬa]p'ε ¹ The moon.	20. [nda]ma ¹ An arrow.	21. [nk'ua]ji ¹ A fishhook.

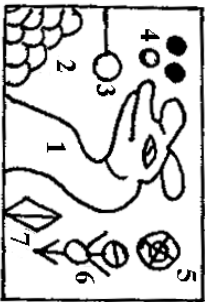
¹⁸ Graham (1958) gives the following information for the tripod stove used by the Qiāng people of the Wēnchuān region: "[The stove is] an iron band or a circle with three equidistant iron legs and with three pieces of iron reaching almost horizontally toward the center from the places where the three iron legs are joined to the iron circle. These three horizontal pieces of iron support a cooking vessel over the fire. The diameter of this stove is nearly 3 feet..." (17) and "... the iron leg that has in it a small hole in which an iron ring hangs... is the fire god... The other two legs are A-ba-sei, the male ancestor, and A-ta-sei, the female ancestor" (49). Plate fifteen shows such a stove. LaPolla and Huang (2003, 14) further state that, "The iron potholder is treated by the Qiāng people with great respect, and cannot be moved at random. One cannot rest one's feet on it, or hang food there to grill. Most important is that you cannot spit in front of the potholder." We do not suggest that Ěrsū concepts and practices are necessarily related to those of the Qiāng, but they may provide a useful model.

22. [tʂɿ] A star.	23. [baɫp'uɫ] A shield used in religious rituals.	24. [np'oɫpaɫ] A religious implement.
25. [siɫpuɫt'ɛɫhkeɫ] A tree, broken by the wind.	26. [siɫpsɿɫ] A <i>qinggang</i> 青冈 tree leaf. ¹⁹	27. [tsaɫ] Pottery jug with a handle for alcohol.
28. [zɔɫmɫdzɿɫ] A ghost.	29. [ts'iɫntʃ'ɑɫ] A precious knife. ²⁰	30. [jiɫzɿɫnuaɫpuɫ] Auspicious constellation.

These thirty *shābā* pictographs are all single-formed words. When they are employed in context, the single-formed words are grouped together in a composite diagram (see examples in Appendix Two). Now we will attempt to explain two composite diagrams below, from the *shābā* scripture ʎoɫmaɫʂɿɫtaɫ. This name literally means 'look at the Sun' or 'look at the days'; it is an astronomical almanac.

¹⁹ Various known as the oriental white oak, Japanese blue oak, ring-cupped oak, and glaucous-leaf oak (*Cyclobalanopsis glauca* syn. *Quercus glauca*).

²⁰ This is a ritual implement, the exact usage of which is uncertain.



From picture nine in *no˧ma˧ŋsy˧ta˧*. The author added numbers in the text later.

EXAMPLE ONE

TRANSCRIPTION AND LITERAL TRANSLATION

<i>fj˧i˧i˧</i>	<i>ʔa˧ŋa˧</i>	<i>ŋge˧</i>	<i>wo˧</i>	<i>no˧</i>	<i>tʃ˧o˧</i>	<i>i˧</i>
正月	月白	九	个	日	狗	(助词)
the first lunar month	white moon	nine	CL ²¹	sun	dog	PRT

<i>no˧ma˧</i>	<i>me˧</i>	<i>kʰa˧tʃ˧</i>	<i>te˧</i>	<i>no˧</i>
日子	火	属	一	天
day	fire	belong	a	day

²¹Grammatical term abbreviations: CL: Classifier; CONJ: Conjunction; MP: Mood particle; PRT: Particle.

xə ¹ zu ¹	me ¹ i ¹	ɬo ¹	mɛ ¹ nts'u ¹ ma ¹ nts'u ¹	tse ¹	tɛ ¹	ntɕ'o ¹
雾	地下	有	天亮不亮	云	一	股
fog	under the earth	have	sky bright not bright	cloud	a	bunch

dɛ ¹	ga ¹	gɛ ¹
(前缀)	升起	(后缀)
(prefix)	appear	(suffix)

ts'i ¹ nŋ ¹ ɑ	ta ¹	ka ¹	dɛ ¹	dzɿ ¹	gɛ ¹	mp'o ¹ pa ¹	ta ¹	gɛ ¹
宝刀	一	把	(前缀)	出现	(后缀)	法器	一	(后缀)
ritual sword	a	CL	(prefix)	appear	(suffix)	religious implement	a	(suffix)

ka ¹	dɛ ¹	dzɿ ¹
个	(前缀)	出现
CL	(prefix)	appear

noɿmaɿ	leɿ	jaɿndeɿ	teɿ	noɿ	Tsaɿ	teɿ	woɿ	deɿdzɿɿtsaɿɿɿ
天日子	(语气词)	好	一	天	陶罐	一	个	(前缀)出现(后缀)
day	MP	good	a	day	pottery	a	CL	(prefix) appear (suffix)

tsɿɿ	neɿ	woɿ	tɛɿsɿoɿ
星星	二	个	(前缀)死
stars	two	CL	(prefix) die

teɿ	woɿ	deɿdzɿɿtsaɿɿɿ	noɿmaɿ	maɿ	ndeɿ	teɿ	noɿ
一	个	(前缀)出现(后缀)	太阳	不	好	一	天
a	CL	(prefix) appear (suffix)	sun	not	good	a	day

daɿ	tsuɿaɿɿ	meɿɿɿ	ɕɿoɿ	teɿ	noɿ
				十	
(语气词)	太岁	地下	有	一	天
MP	deity	under the earth	have	a	day

TRANSLATION

The ninth day of the first lunar month, a dog day, will be a fire day. In the morning there will be fog under the earth. Before sunrise, clouds will appear in the sky. A ritual sword and a religious implement will appear afterwards. This means that the morning will be a good morning. After midday, two stars will die, only one of the three will still be shining and the sun will be in an abnormal condition. One can surmise that there is a deity under the earth; it is better not to move earth that day.

EXPLANATION

There is a dog's head tɕ'oŋ in the center of this picture (1) meaning that this day is a dog day. The dog's body is painted red, which means that it is a fire day according to the five elements: gold, wood, water, fire and earth.²² Ėrsū customarily refer to the first half of a lunar month as ɬaŋəŋ 'white moon', and the other days of the month as ɬaŋnuəŋ black moon. At the bottom left corner of this picture there is a xəŋ'zuŋ (2) meaning 'the morning is foggy'. If this pictograph appears in the bottom right corner it means that fog will appear in the evening. tsaŋ (3) is a jug with a handle. In the picture it is red. The pot is a liquor container.²³ It means that there will be alcohol to drink on that day, which simultaneously indicates that the day is comparatively good. At the top left corner there are three stars, tsɿŋ (4). Two of them are black. This shows that they

²² *Wǔ xíng* 五行 'the five elements' are used in traditional Chinese medicine, geomancy (*fēngshuǐ* 风水), cosmology, astrology, music, and philosophy.

²³ Here, red is a symbol of prosperity, indicating people will have much liquor.

have died and are no longer shining, only one star is white and therefore is still shining. At the top right corner there is a $\text{n}\text{o}^{\text{h}}\text{ma}^{\text{h}}$ (5), a sun, but in the middle of the sun there is a cross, X which means that the sun has been locked in chains. This indicates that the weather will not be very good. Fortunately, there is a sword $\text{ts}^{\text{h}}\text{i}^{\text{h}}\text{ntf}^{\text{h}}\text{a}^{\text{h}}$ (7) that can overcome evil forces, as well as a religious implement²⁴ $\text{np}^{\text{h}}\text{o}^{\text{h}}\text{pa}^{\text{h}}$ (6). Therefore, nothing out of the ordinary will occur the whole day.²⁵

²⁴This can, in addition to the sword, assist in overcoming negative powers.

²⁵That is, the positive and negative forces are balanced.



EXAMPLE TWO

From picture forty-three in *noʼlmaʼsɿʼlta*. The author added numbers in the text later.

TRANSCRIPTION AND LITERAL TRANSLATION

zi-i-ɿ	ɬaʼaʼɿ	ts'aʼsaʼ	woʼ	noʼ	mi-li-ɿ	noʼlmaʼ
二月	月白	十三	个	日	猴(助词)	日子
the second lunar month	white moon	thirteen	CL	day	monkey PRT	day

qʷuʼ	ka-ɬzɿ-ɿ	i-ɿ	noʼlmaʼ	teʼ	noʼ	mɛʼnts'uʼlmaʼnts'uʼ
土	属相	(助词)	日子	一	天	亮 不 亮
earth	zodiac sign	PRT	day	a	day	sky bright not bright

ntʃ'oʼpa-ɿ	teʼ	woʼ	de-hkuʼtsa-ɿ	sɿ-ɬdzɿ-ɿvuʼts'ɛʼ	i-ɿ	noʼlmaʼ
食盘	一	个	(前缀)出现(后缀)	肉 吃 酒 喝	(助词)	日子
food tray	a	CL	(prefix) appear (suffix)	meat eat alcohol drink	PRT	day

xə ¹ zu˧˥	me˧˥i˧˥	ɕo˧˥	me˧˥ŋk'e˧˥	ʂe˧˥	me˧˥	t'e˧˥p'uɑ˧˥tɕɿ
雾	地下	有	天黑	(连词)	天	(前缀) 变
fog	under the earth	have	dark sky	CONJ	day	(prefix) change

me˧˥a˧˥	de˧˥a˧˥tɕe˧˥	
风	(前缀)刮(后缀)	
wind	(prefix) blow (suffix)	

tɕɿ˧˥	ne˧˥	wo˧˥	de˧˥ɪɕɿ˧˥tɕa˧˥tɕɿ	tɕa˧˥	te˧˥	wo˧˥	de˧˥ɪɕɿ˧˥tɕa˧˥tɕɿ
星星	二	个	(前缀)出现(后缀)	陶罐	一	个	(前缀)出现(后缀)
stars	two	CL	(prefix) appear (suffix)	pottery	a	CL	(prefix) appear (suffix)

no˧˥ma˧˥	ja˧˥ti˧˥	te˧˥ŋo˧˥
日子	好	一天
day	good	a day

TRANSLATION

The thirteenth day of the second lunar month will be a monkey day and an earth day. Before sunrise, a tray and a pottery jug will appear, meaning it will be a celebratory day with alcohol and meat. At sunset, conditions will probably change. There will be fog beneath the earth and a tree will be broken by the wind, indicating that a gale will be blowing. However, two stars are still shining in the sky. All in all, it will be a good day.

EXPLANATION

In the middle of this picture there is a monkey head, mi^l (1), meaning that it is a monkey day. The monkey's body is yellow, meaning that it is an earth day according to the five elements. nt^lo-pa^l (2) is a tray. The three triangles on the tray show that there is alcohol, meat, and other food on the tray. Beside it there is a pottery jug with a handle, tsa^l (3). These two things together mean that there is no need to worry that there will be food and drink on that day. Two shining stars ts^l (4) are also shown. (6) means fog. It is in the bottom right hand corner in the picture, showing it will be foggy in the evening. At the same time there is a tree, the upper part of which has been broken by the wind (5). Though the precise meaning is unclear, based on the appearance of the tree, we can infer that it will be a windy day. From the Ėrsū viewpoint, a wind that can break a tree is a very severe wind; it is not a good sign. However, the tray, pottery, and stars are all auspicious symbols, so it will be a good day.

When Fù Mào^{jì} was analyzing the Dōngbā writing system, he stated, "Throughout the process of studying this kind of scripture, I increasingly felt that the writing systems we normally call hieroglyphic writing are actually of two

kinds. One type is writing resembling sequential pictures. I think this should properly be called a pictographic writing system; most Dōngbā scriptures are written in this way. Another type is when a single character expresses a syllable, but most of the graphic structure comes from the semantic component; it should be called a hieroglyphic writing system. Only a small part of the Dōngbā scriptures are written with this kind of graph."²⁶ Fù also compared the different features of the Dōngbā hieroglyphic writing system and pictographic writing system. The Ērsū *shābā* pictographic writing system shares many similar features with the Nàxī pictographic writing system. For example:

1. There is no fixed number of strokes or stroke order. For a single graph, more or fewer strokes are allowed, as long as the overall structure is unaffected. Stroke order is also irregular; it may be from top to bottom or left to right, or bottom to top and right to left. There are no strict rules for how and in what order to write. In a composite diagram; it is usually organized chronologically.²⁷
2. A single pictograph shows one meaning; at times a group of pictographs is used to describe a complex meaning. Some meanings have no graphic representation in the text. For example, the first example surmises that there is a deity under the earth on that day so one should not move earth. However, in the composite diagram there is no pictograph of the earth deity. We must infer the earth deity's presence from an interpretation of the diagram's overall meaning.

²⁶We could not locate the source of this quote.

²⁷According to what will happen during that day.

3. Color has a definite role to play in the expression of meaning in the text; the exact same pictograph may express different meanings due to its color. For example, a star painted in black means that the star is dim, whilst a white star means 'shinning and bright'. Furthermore, the same animal head, if yellow, means 'earth day' and if red 'fire day'. From this we can say that the *shābā* writings are more like drawings than the Dōngbā writing.
4. For the two sample texts we explained above, the composite diagram itself only has six or seven pictographs. However, it takes many words to explain the entire meaning. The *shābā* pictographs mostly suggest concrete objects rather than abstractions; verbs are even rarer. For instance, in the second text, we see a broken tree meaning a windy day. This use of concrete objects to infer new connotations is very rare in SPWS.
5. One pictograph is usually expressed with two or more syllables. Only a few pictographs are represented by a single syllable. From the thirty pictographs depicted above, there are only four single-syllable pictographs, a ratio of one to 7.5 (thirteen percent).
6. Differences in meaning are due not only to the color of the words, but also to the addition of extra strokes. For example, the 'sun' pictographs can be written in many different ways. Often it is just a circle, but this can be modified by the addition of extra strokes, for instance: (1) a locked sun, (2) a brilliant sun, (3) a smiling sun, (4) a normal sun, and so on.



As we know, writing systems in general have three components: (1) a shape component (2) a meaning component, (3) and a sound component. Every kind of writing system symbolizes a different developmental stage; every type of writing system includes some complications. Writing systems that express the shape component are usually called pictographs, but on what theoretical basis can we distinguish between pictographs and hieroglyphs? Based on our analyses of SPWS, we find that SPWS, although it can be classified as a writing system, retains many features of drawing. It should belong to the lowest level of the developmental process for shape-component writing systems. We can say it is in the middle of the process of evolving from drawing into writing. Consequently, to study the features and context of SPWS has great theoretical significance for studying the origins of writing and the history and development of writing systems.

SPWS is mostly used for religious purposes. Of course, its content contains much superstitious material; some of it even seems ridiculous. However, if we use dialectical materialism and historical materialism to observe and analyze it, rejecting its bad points and focusing on its exquisite features, then it must be considered a very valuable source of scientific data for the study of the origin of writing. We feel much gratitude to Ěrsū ancestors for leaving us such a precious cultural inheritance and we wish to thank the Ěrsū people who paid an enormous price in the effort to save and protect this cultural heritage.

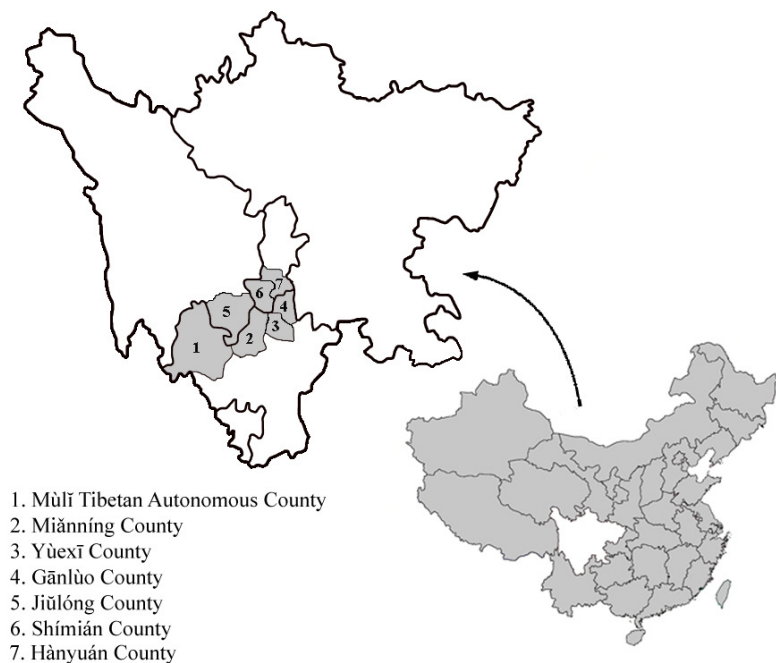
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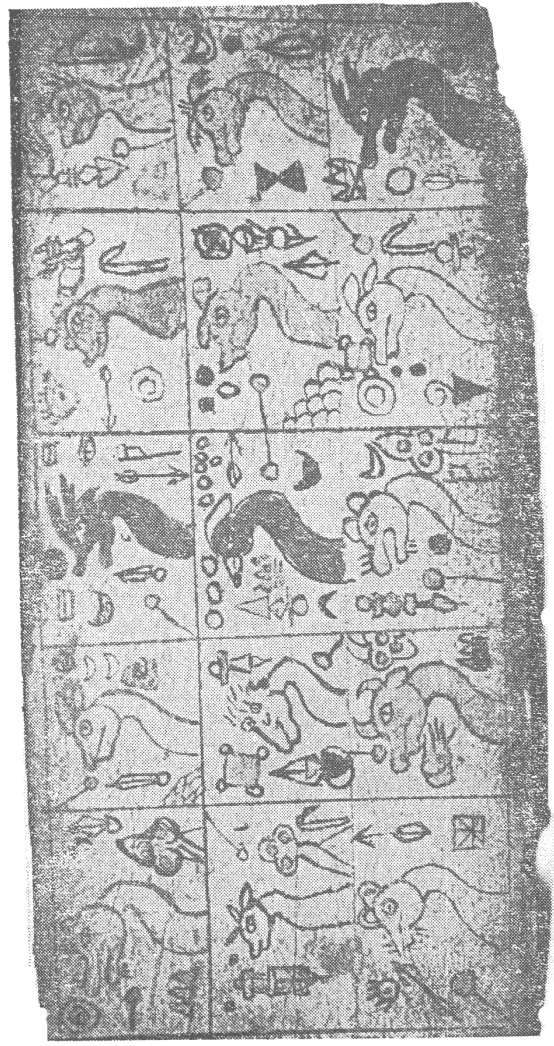
APPENDIX ONE: LOCATIONS
MENTIONED IN THE TEXT²⁸



²⁸ This map was adapted from several maps created by the Wikipedia user Croquant (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Croquant>) and distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

APPENDIX TWO: ĖRSŪ SHĀBĀ PICTOGRAPHIC SCRIPTURE n_olma[ʂ]ta]

Pictures 1–15



Pictures 31–45



Pictures provided by the Gānlüo County Cultural Bureau

THE FOURTH BELMANG: BODHISATTVA, ESTATE
LORD, TIBETAN MILITIA LEADER, AND
CHINESE GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL

Paul K Nietupski (John Carroll University)

ABSTRACT

Social and political changes in the greater Labrang Monastery region of northeastern Tibet, in southern Gansu, eastern Qinghai, and northern Sichuan provinces are described. Particular focus is on the major events and phases of the lifetime of Jikmé Tsultrim Namgyalba (1918-1957) the fourth rebirth of the Belmang lineage, an important member of the Labrang community during a time of major change in regional history. Though this description is specific to only one of the regional communities, its changes were typical of others in the Tibetan northeast.

KEYWORDS

Apa Alo (Huang Zhengqing), Gélukpa, Gonpo Dondrup, Hui, Muslim, Jamyang Zhépa, Machu, Labrang

INTRODUCTION

The life story of the Fourth Labrang Belmang lama, Jikmé Tsultrim Namgyalwa (Chinese, Huang Zhengming; 1918-1957.2.11) is remarkable because of the various major roles he played in the history and culture of the Sino-Tibetan borderlands of Amdo. He crossed the divisions between Tibetan and Chinese civilizations, between political and social systems, and between monastic and lay life. More than the story of an individual, his biography is illustrative of four major phases in the history of the Labrang community-at-large and how these phases evolved and endured during the early twentieth century. Using Belmang's life experiences as an outline, and building on the tumultuous series of events in his early childhood, the four phases were first, his ordination at age ten and subsequent monastic education (1928-1937); second, the period in his life and in the community at large when new ideas and institutions were implemented (1937-1949); third, the period of restructuring community and monastery infrastructures (1950-1957); and fourth, after Belmang's death, the dismantling of the monastic and social institutions (1958-present).

During the period of Tibetan monasticism (1928-1937), the Fourth Belmang functioned as a prominent reborn lama and estate owner, holding religious and political authority over his inherited properties. The second phase in his life and that of the community was the period of Tibetan modernity (1937-1949). He was stimulated by such forward-thinking Tibetans as his brother, Apa Alo (Huang Zhengqing) (1903-1997), their Chinese associates Xuan Xiafu and Li Anzhai, such foreign friends as Marion and Blanche Griebenow and others. He was assisted or at least motivated by the governments of Sun Yatsen, Feng Yuxiang, and the Nationalists, and by the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa. He was also stirred by his 1937-1940 excursion to

central Tibet. This phase in Belmang's life and in the life of the community had many influences, but Belmang kept his monastic vows intact and the changes in the community were internally motivated and marked a period of evolution and creative thinking on the part of several of the leading Labrang Tibetans. The third phase was the period of reform (1950-1957), notably after the Chinese Communist revolution, marked by the implementation of social and political ideologies and infrastructures that originated outside of the Tibetan environment, and further by the Fourth Belmang's personal transformation. The 1950-1957 third phase marked a shift to accommodation of Chinese political structures. The fourth phase began in 1958, after Belmang's death, with the restructuring of the Labrang community's social and political structures. The first three phases are evident in the biography of the Fourth Belmang and in the history of the Labrang community, and the fourth by the sweeping changes of 1958 and the following decades.

In 1919, the Fourth Belmang was identified as the rebirth of the Belmang lineage, and as such was regarded as a living bodhisattva, an emanation body of a Buddha, and at the same time the inheritor of his predecessors' estate. He was granted all of the rights and privileges of his status, which included the highest level of social and political prestige. His inherited estate, his *labrang*, consisted of revenue-generating pasture and agricultural landholdings, corvée from the communities in those lands, and sponsorship for religious and holiday services.

The Fourth Belmang's identification as a rebirth, a *tulku*, by the senior lamas at Amchok Monastery¹ in about

¹ The word 'monastery' in English is used for the Tibetan *dgon pa*, literally an isolated place, or hermitage, a place of solitude where religious practitioners live. The Tibetan word *grwa tshang* also carries the meaning of 'monastery',

1919 and the 1924 verification by the Ninth Panchen Lama brought considerable wealth and power. The process of inheritance whereby the estate remained intact and increased from one rebirth to the next brought wealth, status, privilege, and political responsibility. In later years, by virtue of his inherited and acquired status, the Fourth Belmang held monastic offices at Labrang Monastery, including Treasurer and Regent.²

Two of the Fourth Belmang's brothers were Apa Alo, a key figure in contemporary Gansu, and the Fifth Jamyang Zhepa (1916-1947), the rebirth in the leading lineage of Labrang Monastery. With two reborn bodhisattvas in the family, as well as Gonpo Dondrup, the fierce patriarch of the family, and Apa Alo, the eldest son, this family was arguably among the most powerful in early twentieth century Amdo.

THE EARLY YEARS—1918-1928

The Fourth Belmang was born in Lithang (then in Xikang Province, but now Sichuan Province) in the Tibetan Kham region. The family patriarch, Gonpo Dondrup, is known to have had interactions with the Chinese in the early twentieth century, but in the early years after the fall of the Qing Dynasty, the family left Lithang for the grasslands of northern Kham and Amdo. Belmang and his siblings were

because it means a place where groups of monks study, worship, and live. The latter term is also sometimes translated as 'college', which is used here.

² See the photographs of the Fourth Belmang's residence; the Labrang seat of his monastic estate and temple; the Fourth Belmang, ca. 1945; and also the delegation to Chongqing in Zhabs drung tshang 1948, photo appendix, 15-16 and 28.

raised in Tibetan nomad camps.³ On their way to Labrang and the installation of the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa, the family stayed at Amchok, where reports say that the boy was named Belmang's rebirth. This was confirmed in 1924 by the Ninth Panchen Lama.⁴

The family arrived in Labrang by 1919-1920. Tension between the Muslims and Labrang Tibetans was high and conflicts common in the 1920s, e.g., on 27 June 1924 there was a battle between the Muslims and Tibetans in Ganjia, and again in Ganjia, on 25-27 April 1925 at Serchentang.⁵ In both battles, the Tibetans commanded by Gonpo Dondrup fought the predominantly Hui, Xining-based Ninghai Army led by Ma Bufang. The Tibetans were ill-equipped, sustained heavy losses, and were routed.⁶ Gonpo Dondrup, Apa Alo, the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa, and the entire family left Labrang just weeks after the 1924 incident in July 1924 and remained in exile until 1927.

The group went first to Lanzhou,⁷ but soon went on to Tsandrok Monastery in Méma, Gannan for the winter of

³ The period between the family's departure from Lithang and their 1919-1920 arrival at Labrang is not well documented. The family left Lithang in about 1911 because of the unstable political and military environment there, and lived in Amdo nomad territory of northern Sichuan and southern Gansu until 1919 (see Huang Zhengqing 1989, Huang Zhengqing 1994).

⁴ See for example Chen Zhongren 2001, 1,009.

⁵ A brief description of this battle is given in Gong Ziyang 1933, 23, 30.

⁶ A brief account of this battle appears in Zhang Yuwen 1991, 93.

⁷ Zhang Yuwen 1991, 93; see Huang Zhengqing 1989, 31.

1924-1925.⁸ They traveled further to Gomang Monastery in Ngawa Tsodru, Sichuan, where they stayed for two years,⁹ after which they returned to the high plains near Hezuo, Gansu, at Mépo Garsar, where they stayed until June 1927.¹⁰ In these years Apa Alo went to Lanzhou and appealed to the Chinese authorities, then led by Feng Yuxiang and his appointed officer, Liu Yufen, to intervene.¹¹

The Fourth Belmang, his brother, Jamyang Zhépa, their family, and entourage returned to Labrang in 1927, after which the Xiahe County government was formally established in 1928. Building on earlier initiatives, the

⁸ Interview. Tsandrok Monastery was founded in 1819. See also Zhang Wenyu 1935, 308–309. For a description of Tsandrok Monastery see Dbang rgyal 1993, 200–210.

⁹ Interview.

¹⁰ Huang Zhengqing 1994, 73–74. These events are summarized in Huang Zhengqing 1989, 80 and Zhang Qiyun 1970, 31.

¹¹ In Zhang Yuwen (1991, 93), the sequence of events and who was in charge are unclear. In 1922, Gonpo Dondrup, (Huang Weizhong) is cited as chief negotiator between Muslims and Tibetans. However, after the 1924 battle in Ganjia, the text says that Apa Alo/ Huang Zhengqing and the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa went to Lanzhou and appealed to the Chinese for help. In 1924, Apa Alo was twenty-one years old, and the Fifth Jamyang Zhepa was eight years old. It appears that the editor of this anonymous manuscript has conflated the facts; other sources report that the young Jamyang Zhepa stayed in Gannan and northern Sichuan until just prior to returning to Labrang in 1927. The text states further that Apa Alo was interested in both assistance for the Tibetans' political cause and for their culture.

following years brought attempts to modernize Labrang,¹² whose authorities allowed a broad range of educational initiatives, the presence of different religions, and economic and technological innovations, though oral sources report resistance. This was the Fourth Belmang's childhood environment.

PHASE ONE: BELMANG'S YOUTH AND EDUCATION, 1928-1937

There were two elementary schools in Xiahe beginning in 1928¹³ and continuing into the 1940s. One was exclusively Tibetan and the other was for all local ethnic groups.¹⁴ Oral accounts report that Belmang attended one of the new schools. From 1927 until 1937 the Fourth Belmang studied as a monk at Labrang, and completed the entire course of study, modeled on that of Lhasa's Drépong Monastery. He is described as an accomplished monk and scholar, and especially proficient at memorization. He is reported to have completed and excelled in the entire monastic curriculum at Labrang's Tösam Ling College, which included debate, tantric ritual, sand maṇḍala construction, and other subjects.

¹² Other infrastructure projects at Labrang included a commercial group in 1918, a post office in 1923, a tax bureau in 1927, and a telegraph office in 1928 (Deng Long and Zhao Shi 1991, 2).

¹³ Si Jun 1984, 76.

¹⁴ Huang Zhengqing 1994, 77, 99; Huang Zhengqing 1989, 41–42.

PHASE TWO: BELMANG
CROSSES BORDERS, 1937-1949

Belmang traveled to Lhasa with his brother, the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa, in 1937. He entered Gomang College at Drépung Monastery and studied there for at least two full years, traveling to the major monasteries in central and western Tibet, and returning to Labrang in 1940 at age twenty-three.

Building on the educational initiatives already established, the following decade brought new ideas to Labrang through the office of the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa and the assistance of Belmang, who was an increasingly active figure in public politics, and their oldest brother, Apa Alo, whose status as a political and militia leader increased rapidly. Meanwhile, Belmang remained an active religious figure. The Fifth had founded Gyutö College at Labrang in 1928, and refinished it in 1942 with Belmang's active involvement and installment as second abbot. It was at this time that Belmang wrote the Labrang Gyutö *Rulebook/Chayik*. He was a key functionary at Gyutö and deeply involved with the teaching and learning of the major Gélukpa tantras.¹⁵ Evidence of his character is in his taking in and personally nursing his ailing older brother, Khyenrab Dondrup, and while occupied with other work, and against tradition, personally administering his own estate properties.¹⁶ In addition to his other activities, Belmang planted a great number of trees in the Labrang region during this time.¹⁷

¹⁵ Drakgonpa konchog tenpa rabgyé (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas) 2001, 552.

¹⁶ Drakgonpa konchog tenpa rabgyé (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas) 2001, 552, 554.

¹⁷ Chen Zhongren 2001, 1,009; Zhabs drung tshang 1948, 44.

Belmang was actively involved in resolving confrontations between Machu in Gansu and Ngawa in Sichuan¹⁸ in 1942 and, in 1943, he was appointed senior member of a delegation to Chongqing, where he met Chiang Kaishek, and presented the Nationalists with support for a reported thirty aircraft for the Chinese military.¹⁹ He was appointed Treasurer of Labrang Monastery in 1944, the second highest monastic office at Labrang. A year later he was appointed as a functionary of the Nationalist government, the Director of Xiahe County's Provisional Advisory Committee and he was selected to represent Labrang at a Gansu provincial meeting in Lanzhou²⁰ in 1946 during which modern sources report that he introduced ideas about developing and revolutionizing the borderlands.²¹ The Fourth Belmang was thus fully engaged in his dual monastic and political offices; recognized by the monastic and lay religious community as a reborn bodhisattva and estate owner, and as a regional political authority by the central Chinese Nationalist government.

He served as Chief Administrator of the Xiahe branch of the Nationalist government's Three Principles of the People²² Youth League later in 1946 and, in the same year, established the *Amdo Monthly Journal* and served as

¹⁸ Chen Zhongren 2001, 1,009.

¹⁹ Chen Zhongren 2001, 1009. The Chinese sources agree that the Labrang authorities donated aircraft, which suggests the Labrang authorities provided money designated for aircraft.

²⁰ Zhazha 2002, 187.

²¹ Chen Zhongren 2001, 1009. This is fairly strident rhetoric, and if it does describe Belmang's activities, he did this as a functionary of the Nationalist government and as Treasurer of Labrang Monastery.

²² Chen Zhongren 2001, 1009; see also the detailed account in Che Manbao 1999, 628-630, 124-130.

its editor, or according to certain reports, co-editor with Wu Zhengang. Later in early 1947, he worked with the Gansu provincial government to promote Labrang's communications, public health, and education infrastructures.²³ Shortly after the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa's death in 1947, Belmang was assigned Regent of Labrang Monastery and later (in 1951) took charge of locating and identifying the Sixth Jamyang Zhépa;²⁴ again demonstrating mastery of monastic and religious affairs. At the same time he was engaged in innovative initiatives with Labrang's Han neighbors. Belmang continued to serve as Regent of Labrang Monastery from 1948-1949.

In this phase of his life, and in the life of the community, there was much contact and sharing with Labrang's Chinese neighbors; a continuation of cross-border contacts established at the founding of the monastery and earlier in Amdo history. Belmang's family was from Lithang, where the patriarch Gonpo Dondrup had had much contact with the Chinese. Selective borrowing of innovations from the Chinese was an ongoing process. This period marks a new interest in innovations taken from various sources, not only from Labrang's Chinese neighbors.

The list of initiatives and exploration of outside sources in this period is long. First, public education was increasingly valued in Labrang and even in remote areas, and in some cases for women.²⁵ Chinese sources and resources were tapped, but the Labrang authorities also established contacts with foreign, non-Chinese missionaries,

²³ Zhazha 2002, 187.

²⁴ Drakgonpa konchog tenpa rabgyé (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas) 2001, 554.

²⁵ For a full list of the educational and other initiatives at Labrang, see Nietupski, forthcoming.

including the Griebenows, and others.²⁶ A degree of ideological pluralism from sources other than China is marked by documented encounters with the Griebenows, and by the Labrang authorities allowing the construction of their Christian mission on monastery property. Other advances included allowing the rebuilding of a Linxia-based Muslim mosque in Xiahe, and support for construction of a Guandi Temple in Xiahe, both on monastery property. Further, in these years the Jamyang Zhépa and his family personally supported the expansion of the Ngakpa College just outside of Labrang's monastery walls, a development without precedent in other Tibetan areas.²⁷

In addition to these local developments, Jamyang Zhépa's and Belmang's 1937-1940 excursion to Lhasa resulted in initiatives at Labrang based on central Tibetan models. For example, the central Labrang political office, the Yiktsang, was established on the model of Lhasa's Ganden Potrang. The Jamyang Zhépa also built a family residence, Tashi Rabten, outside of Labrang Monastery modeled on Lhasa's Norbu Lingka. Other rather 'grassroots' Tibetan initiatives included the revitalization of Labrang's Tibetan arts, notably the development of Namthar, a monastic music troupe. China served as one source for this 1937-1949 phase of Labrang's development, but it was by no means the only well-spring of culture and politics. Using Belmang's life history as an indicator, he retained his monastic vows during these years and was fully involved in Buddhist monastic life.

The political importance of Labrang's close Chinese neighbors was certainly not ignored, a fact that in itself marks a degree of innovation. Belmang represented a group

²⁶ The contacts between the Fifth Jamyang Zhepa and the Griebenow family are well documented in the Griebenow letters, e.g., Nietupski 1999.

²⁷ See Nietupski, forthcoming.

in 1948 consisting of Apa Alo and seventeen officials from Labrang's main and branch monasteries at a meeting of Nationalist government delegates. This group remained intact until 1949, when the Fourth Belmang at least acknowledged and Apa Alo formally joined the Chinese Communist Party.²⁸ The impact of this on Labrang's fortunes was far reaching, extending in the following decades to Labrang's benefit. Apa Alo was appointed governor (*zhou zhang*) of Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. The 1949 Communist victory brought only minor changes in Labrang.

In sum, it is fair to ask how much influence the Chinese had at Labrang and the extent of their reforms, or how much reform the Tibetans implemented at Labrang. The Fourth Belmang and his associates clearly saw the need for engaging the Chinese, and were also keenly interested in new political ideas but this does not, in itself, indicate a willingness to abandon Tibetan religion and cultural systems. Evidence of both modern innovation and adherence to traditions is discernible in Belmang's public life and ongoing religious activities.

PHASE THREE: MACHU, 1950-1957

Many of Labrang's territories (e.g., Ngulra and Machu) had monastery-appointed representatives (*mgo ba*), but in Dzogé Méma and Machu there were also other officers from the Labrang Monastery central office. The next phase of the Fourth Belmang's life and that of the Labrang community is marked by his assignment to a monastery office in Machu, where his office was later conflated into the Chinese

²⁸ For Apa Alo, Sheng Jingxin (1989, 18); for Belmang, Drakgonpa konchog tenpa rabgyé (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas; 2001, 558).

Communist Party's local government, which regarded Machu as a county (*xian*). Belmang was the first of the Machu CCP office holders, beginning in about 1953. Thus there was some attempt to preserve Labrang's political hierarchies at the same time as allowing new structures, but this period marked a significant change in Belmang's life and in the life of the community. These were the post-Communist revolution years, marked by the formal entry of Apa Alo into the Communist Party in 1949, and by the urgent need for the Labrang Tibetans to recognize the changes in the Chinese vision of their new political system.

These post-revolution years were chaotic in China, and though ideologically cognizant and often sympathetic to the new political ideas, there was little change in sovereignty and administration in Labrang and in its territories. This is made evident for example by the ongoing and long-simmering conflict between two *tsowa* 'clan groups'²⁹ Métra Shul and Tu Mé, in Machu and Ngulra that had been smoldering since violent clashes in 1937 and 1941. The Labrang authorities attempted to intervene each time. Belmang was involved in negotiations between Machu and Ngawa in 1942. Again, in 1951, there was fierce fighting in Ngulra, and a local fighter (Abo Karmo) killed two men from Ngawa. An oral account cites 1952, when Apa Alo called a meeting of all the local leaders, as a pivotal year in the effort to resolve this dispute.³⁰ However, several local leaders were unwilling to join what was reportedly perceived as a Beijing-instigated attempt at unity mediated by the Labrang authorities. Belmang and the

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of this complex social unit, see Nietupski, forthcoming. '*Tsowa*' may indicate an extended family or clan, or several unrelated families or clans. It was a common social unit in nomad areas.

³⁰ Interview.

Labrang authorities were nonetheless in charge of the greater Machu region.

In response to the ongoing hostility to attempts at promoting group solidarity in the Labrang community on a Chinese Communist model, Belmang went to Beijing in 1952 to study the Chinese language, politics, and history at the Central Nationalities Institute. This course of study was rather brief (the level of Belmang's comprehension of the Chinese language, for example, is unclear), but it was a tacit acknowledgement of Chinese authority for, in the next year, Belmang returned to serve as a delegate to the People's Committee in the newly formed Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Region. When the Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture was founded, Belmang served as delegate to the People's Committee for the first two terms of that office.

In Machu, Belmang retained his local prestige and properties, and after his return from Beijing in about 1953 he was a delegate to the Committee on Governance in the Border Regions of Three Provinces and in 1955 'county commissioner' of Machu County.³¹

The Fourth is reported to have become a swashbuckling figure in these years—perhaps on his return from Beijing and assumption of his assignment in restive Machu. A number of his contemporaries reported that he rode with the local militia in skirmishes against neighboring nomad groups, and the Sichuan Méwo, and otherwise abandoned his monastic vows. The disputes between Labrang's territories and Méwo in Sichuan continued until

³¹ Drakgonpa konchog tenpa rabgyé (Brag dgon pa dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas; 2001, 562). The Tibetan refers to Belmang's position as *gtso 'gan* 'executive leader', 'director' for both of these posts, but the Chinese uses 'delegate' (*wei yuan*) for the first and 'county leader', 'county director', or 'county commissioner' (*xian zhang*), for the second.

1956-1957, when they were finally resolved by the Labrang authorities.³²

From 1953-1957, Labrang authorities promoted development in agriculture, the pastoral economy in nomad areas, commerce, the introduction of technology and transportation infrastructures, increase of population, and regional recognition of the Communist Party, and unity among minority groups.³³ In his essay describing three years of development in the region (dated 1 October 1956, published in 1957), Apa Alo reported progress in all of these areas.³⁴ Belmang worked as a Labrang estate owner and political representative with two loyalties: Labrang and his heritage, and Beijing and its power. He died in 1957, leaving behind a relatively intact religious infrastructure, nomad society, and religious hierarchy.

PHASE FOUR: DISMANTLING AND REDEFINITION, 1958

The period after Belmang's death is marked vividly by the decade beginning in 1958, during which the Chinese Red Army and central government took Labrang's territories. The much reduced Xiahe County was now fully under the jurisdiction of the Chinese central government. Monastic officials were dismissed, monks were often forced to

³² Interview. This source mentioned the Fifth Jamyang Zhépa's 1940 visit to Ngulra. See the account of these events from 1937–1951 in 'Jam dbyangs (1991, 61–62).

³³ On several occasions, Apa Alo mentions successes in the Mé (Mes, dMe) region, which has a long history of conflict with Labrang (See Huang Zhengqing 1957, 8, 20).

³⁴ See Huang Zhengqing (1957, 15) on the role of religion in 'new society', and how monks were working in community offices.

renounce their vows, and community tribal leaders were forced to capitulate, or in cases of resistance, engage in battle with the Red Army, be imprisoned, or executed. Monastic buildings and temples at Labrang Monastery were destroyed or converted to different uses in attempts to redefine community values, for example by building a livestock slaughterhouse on the site of a destroyed Buddhist temple. Makley (2007) has shown that gender roles were modified after 1958. Livestock and property were confiscated, and attempts made to increase industry and agriculture. In brief, this phase, marked by the death of the Fourth Belmang, signaled a major Chinese effort to change social, religious, and political structures at Labrang.

CONCLUSION

The Fourth Belmang was a reborn bodhisattva, an example of the fully developed Tibetan Gélukpa model. His rebirth was prophesied, he was identified, was educated to the standards of Gélukpa scholarship, and was fully initiated into and educated in many aspects of Tibetan Buddhist tantrism. He was also an estate owner, whose estate was an example of a pre- and post-Chinese Amdo social, political, and economic community.

The Fourth was an individual seeking to bridge the gaps between Tibetan society, politics, and religion, demonstrating strong commitment to Tibetan religious, social, and political structures. He also confirmed a commitment to educational, technological, social, and political reforms after his return from Lhasa in 1940. These commitments were not seen as mutually contradictory; a devotion to Tibetan Buddhist beliefs, reborn bodhisattvas, estate structures, and nomad social and economic structures for Belmang did not preclude modernization, including education, social, and political changes. His greatest

contribution was his ability to promote and preserve Labrang's heritage while simultaneously engaging his neighbors and the new ideas and challenges they brought, unlike the contexts of his predecessors, the Nationalists and later, the Communist Chinese.

In sum, the Fourth Belmang's biography illustrates major periods in Labrang and Amdo's modern history—the Tibetan monastic phase (1928-1937), the period of Tibetan modernity (1937-1949), the period of reform (1950-1957), and the Communist-led dismantling of monastic and community social structures (beginning in 1958). Finally, Belmang and his Labrang family and associates may be considered in the same category as such other famous Amdo individuals as Dobi Shérab Gyatso and Gendun Chöpel, whose exploits and views of changing Tibet are comparatively well known. Taken together, these individuals may be best understood as prominent figures in sweeping changes in social and political consciousness, and the beginnings of a broad-based group of forward-thinking Amdo Tibetans.

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[Collected Documents on Northwest China
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Northwest China]. Lanzhou 兰州: Lanzhou guji
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Bookstore].

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

TIBETAN

Abo Karmo, a 'bos dkar mo
Amchok, a mchog
Apa Alo, a pha a blo
Belmang, dbal mang
Chayik, bca' yig
Dobi Sherab Gyatso, rdo sbis shes rab rgya mtsho
Drakgonpa konchog tenpa rabgyé, Brag dgon pa dkon
mchog bstan pa rab rgyas
Drépung, 'bras spungs
dzong, rdzong
Dzogé Méma, mdzod dge smad ma
Ganden Potrang, dga' ldan pho brang
Ganjia, rgan rgya
Gélugpa, dge lugs pa
Gendun Chöpel, dge 'dun chos 'phel
Gomang, sgo mang
Gonpo Dondrup, mgon po don grub
gtso 'gan, director, executive
Gyutö, rgyud stod
Jamyang Zhépa, 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa
Jikmé Tsultrim Namgyalba, 'jigs med tshul khrims rnam
rgyal ba
Khyenrab Dondrup, mkhyen rab don grub
Labrang, bla brang
Machu, rma chu
Méma, smad ma
Mépo Garsar, dme po'i sgar gsar
Métra Shul, dme khra shul
Méwo, Mes (Dme) bo
mgo ba, representative
Namthar, rnam thar

Ngakpa Dratsang, sngags pa grwa tshang
Ngawa, rnga ba
Ngulra, dngul rwa
Norbu Lingka, nor bu ling ka
phyag mdzod, treasurer
rgyal tshab, regent
Serchentang, gser chen thang
Tashi Rabten, bkra shis rab brtan
Tösam Ling, thos bsam gling
Tsandrok, mtshan sgrogs
Tsowa, tsho ba
Tu Mé, thu dme
tulku, sprul sku
Wangyal, dbang rgyal
Yiktsang, yig tshang
zhing chen gsum gyi mtha' khul srid gzhung las don u yon
lhan khang, Committee on Governance in the Border
Regions of Three Provinces

CHINESE

Anduo yuekan 安多月刊, Amdo Monthly Journal

Feng Yuxiang 冯玉祥

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Hui 回

Li Anzhai (Li Anche) 李安宅

Linshi canyi 临时参议, Provisional Advisory Committee

Linxia 临夏

Litang 理塘 (Tibetan, *li thang*)

Liu Yufen 刘郁芬

Ninghai 宁海

Sanmin Zhuyi 三民主义, Three Principles of the People
weiyuan 委员

Wu Zhengang 误振纲

Xiahe 夏河

xian 县, county

xianzhang 县长

Xikang 西康

Xining 西宁

Xuan Xiafu 宣侠父 (Tibetan, *bkra shis tshe ring*)

Zhonghua minzu daxue 中华民族大学, Central
Nationalities University

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THE HORSE WITH TWO SADDLES:
TAMXHWE IN MODERN GOLOK

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ABSTRACT

Thirty-three examples of oral sayings, mainly from the Golok area, used in conflict mediation are presented and discussed in terms of their usage by mediators and how they reflect Tibetan values and life.

KEY WORDS

Proverbs, riddles, *tamxhwe*, Golok, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province

"You have to go to Golok to hear real *tamxhwe*."¹

Conflict resolution is a topic most Amdo Tibetans will readily discuss and the oratorical skills of the *zowa* (*gzu ba*) 'mediators' are always emphasized. It was in Golok that they were said to be particularly impressive. "They make displays of oratory during the early stages of the mediation process," explained one informant, a respected mediator from Machu (Rma chu). "They use proverbs and riddles that are difficult to understand. It is like jousting with words, a display of skill." He was referring to the representatives of individual parties, but the same skills are even more important for mediators. The more serious and entrenched the conflict—two Amdo tribes may fight for generations over valuable grassland—the more important it is to secure a high-status mediator, often a lama or local leader with a reputation for oratory.

The mediators' task is to persuade reluctant parties to compromise and accept compensation in lieu of taking revenge for an injury or killing; this can require a lengthy and elaborate process extending over several days. "In Golok," my informant continued, "they use *tamxhwe*; those who can make good speeches and employ it well enjoy high reputations." The *tamxhwe*, it appeared, were like proverbs or riddles and in one or two cases an informant was able to repeat one of them to me, but I was repeatedly told that I had to go to Golok to learn more. The oratorical skills of the Golok mediators obviously had a considerable reputation throughout Amdo, and in the summer of 2004 I went to this large area in southern Qinghai Province to investigate.²

¹ I transcribe oral Tibetan terms according to the local pronunciation, which varies considerably even within Amdo, and indicate the spelling according to the Wylie (1959) system: Golok (Mgo log), *tamxhwe* (*gtam dpe*). I use Wylie to transcribe the *tamxhwe*.

² I conducted almost twelve months of fieldwork in Amdo between 2003 and 2007, during which I spent a

BACKGROUND

Before being more firmly incorporated into the People's Republic of China in 1958, the region known as Amdo, the north-eastern part of the Tibetan Plateau, was not politically unified. The majority of Amdo consists of grasslands where nomadic pastoralists secure their livelihoods by herding yaks and sheep, bordered by agricultural valleys populated by Tibetan and Hui farmers to the north and east. Although some parts of the region had formed small polities or kingdoms, in most pastoral areas the nomads were organized into tribes and each used a distinct area of grassland and combined to worship a territorial deity. The tribes of Golok formed a loose confederacy under three hereditary ruling families and had a particular reputation for feuding and fighting.³ Similar patterns were found throughout Amdo. Historical accounts, particularly those of Robert Ekvall, who lived in the area from the 1920s to the 1950s, describe their elaborate processes of mediation, including the oratorical skills of the best mediators, and I found similar patterns continuing in the twenty-first century.

considerable amount of time in different parts of Golok. I am very grateful to Rigdrol, who helped with the translations, to Kevin Stuart, Susan Costello, and Angus Cargill for their assistance and advice and to the many Tibetans who supplied the information and assistance that was essential to the preparation of this article.

³ I describe this tribal organisation at greater length in Pirie (2005). I use the term 'tribe', following Khoury and Kostiner (1990), to refer to these groups, which have a distinct identity, relatively egalitarian internal relations, and leaders who are more like chiefs than heads of a state. Historical accounts of tribal relations in Amdo, including the patterns of feuding and fighting, are found in Ekvall (1939, 1954, 1964, 1968) and in Hermanns (1949, 1959).

I traveled throughout the region seeking a better understanding of these mediation processes, but it was in Golok, as my informants had promised, that I found the most elaborate traditions of oratory.

THE *TAMXHWE*

In Golok all mediators told me proudly of their oratorical skills and all confirmed the importance of *tamxhwe*. Using *tamxhwe* requires skill, sounds impressive, and demonstrates erudition, one of them told me. Another remarked on his ability to confuse opponents in a pastureland dispute by using *tamxhwe*. Several repeated examples to me. They were mostly two line proverbs, but there were also examples of longer sayings and shorter maxims, including some resembling koans (short paradoxical statements).

Seeing my interest, one informant dug out a book of *tamxhwe* entitled *Dmangs khrod kyi gnam dpe (Folk Proverbs)*, published in 1991 by the Golok Prefecture Office. This was well into China's reform period, after the government had largely reversed the previous policies of collectivization. The effect, in Amdo, was to return livestock to private ownership of individual families and, effectively, to allow the nomads to return to many of the ways of life that they had previously followed. This meant that inter-tribal relations, in the form of feuding and fighting, re-emerged and with them the need for elaborate forms of conflict resolution. The production of this book seems to have been part of a government initiative in Golok to record local history and customs. I also collected a copy of a two-volume history published at the same time, which contained genealogies of the former ruling families, records of marriages, histories of the monasteries, and descriptions of significant events. It also contained a redaction of the old

laws of Golok, which set out principles and rules relating to warfare and mediation.⁴

The book of *tamxhwe* contained several hundred of these proverbs (mostly in the two-line form), arranged in no particular order. Most related to matters of morality, personal conduct, gender, and family relations. They were clearly proverbs and dicta that would have been repeated orally as guidance for children, during discussions in the tent or on the grasslands as men (in particular) reflected on contemporary events; and they could have been used during meetings of tribal groups, as well as during mediation processes. None of them had direct religious significance, although there were oblique references, as can be seen below, to certain aspects of Buddhism. Apart from this book, *tamxhwe* appears to have been an almost exclusively oral tradition.

Unable to obtain a copy of the book, I wrote down a selection of those proverbs which seemed to have the most relevance to the nature of social order and the causes and resolution of conflict. What follows is not, therefore, an entirely representative sample, but gives a flavor of the content of the book and insight into how *tamxhwe* can be employed during practices of mediation.⁵

⁴ Contemporary relations between Tibetans' tribal organisation, practices of conflict, and conflict resolution, on the one hand, and representatives of the Chinese state and local government, on the other, are complex and the subject of other publications (Pirie 2005, forthcoming). An analysis of the Golok law code is in preparation.

⁵ For the translations I have relied upon the explanations of my assistants and informants in Golok, the dictionary of Chandra Das (1998) and that of Huadanzhaxi et al. (2000), an Amdo dictionary containing many words and phrases particular to the region. As an anthropologist I do not claim expertise in the translation of written Tibetan and have not

Among matters of general morality is this statement about honesty and accuracy:

1

¹ rtsis na grangs ka tshang dgos

² tshang na rgya kha 'dang dgos

¹ When you count you must include every number,

² When you have finished the amount must be right.⁶

Adopting a more ironic tone is this comment on the nature of work:

2

¹ za ran dus khrung khrung sngon mo'i ske bsrings 'dra

² las ran dus rje btsun sgrol ma'i sku 'dra 'dra

¹ When it is time to eat you acquire the elongated neck of a blue crane,

² When it is time to work you become like a statue (of Jetsun Drolma).⁷

Others emphasize the need for cooperation:

sought out the literal meaning of the most obscure examples. I have, rather, been relatively free in the translations, seeking to capture the gist of the words, particularly as explained by my assistants, rather than their exact meanings. Needless to say, I would be grateful if obvious translation errors were pointed out.

⁶ My assistant translated it as 'when you weigh you must be accurate', but I am unsure how *tshang* might mean 'weigh'.

⁷ Jetsun Drolma, also known by the Sanskrit name Tara, is a ubiquitous and revered Tibetan Buddhist deity.

3

¹ skud pa gcig gis ras mi nyan

² sdong bo gcig gis nags mi nyan

¹ A single thread will not make a cloth,

² A single tree does not make a forest.

and the need for discipline:

4

¹ kha tshod yod (med) kyis gnam la phu tshags

² lag tshod yod (med) kyis sa la ri mo

¹ An ill-disciplined voice whistles in the wind,

² Ill-disciplined hands (only) draw a picture on the ground.

Others reflect on the nature of wisdom, particularly the dangers of careless or thoughtless speech. This is a recurrent theme in the Tibetan cultural world, and is the subject of one of the *mi dge ba bcu*, the ten Buddhist moral prohibitions.

5

¹ zas za na pho bas zhu ni zhig

² tshig bshad na gor ra 'dus ni zhig

¹ When you eat your stomach digests (the food)

² When you talk you gather up (your words).

6

¹ gtam glen pas bshad na 'phya byed yin

² rta zha bo rgyug na dgod byed yin

¹ If you talk stupidly you will be derided,

² If you race a lame horse you will be laughed at.

7

¹ bsam blo ma btang gi skad cha

² dmigs pa ma bzung gi phad sgra

¹ Thoughtless speech (is like),

² *Pad dra* without (proper) mental attention.⁸

8

¹ gtam go go bu chas bshad rgyu min

² g.yu rig rig bu mos 'dog rgyu min

¹ A man who hears everything should not talk,

² A woman who looks at turquoise should not wear it.

This is one of several that refer to the position and roles of women, many of which are not wholly respectful.

Several of the *tamxhwe* equate careless or angry speech with the creation or exacerbation of conflict. The most serious conflicts that arise in Amdo are generally the consequence of livestock-raiding and pasture disputes. However, there are also cases of personal animosity between individuals which erupt into fighting. A serious injury or death caused by men of another tribe can lead to a full-scale conflict between two tribes. The *tamxhwe* below all highlight the role of words, rather than actions, in causing conflict.

9

¹ gri yi rma la drag rgyu yod

² tshig gi rma la drag rgyu med

⁸ *Phad sgra* is likely the Sanskrit *phat sgra*, translated by Das (1998, 819) as "a powerful and efficacious ejaculation used in mantras for the destruction and suppression of evil spirits." My assistant thought it was a prayer said over dead bodies.

¹ A knife wound will heal,

² A verbal wound will not heal.

10

¹ mi'i bar la kha

² khyi'i bar la tshil

¹ What comes between men is words,

² What comes between dogs is fat.

11

¹ 'chi bdag chon thag sne na yod

² mi kha rta rdang nang na 'khor

¹ The Lord of Death is at the end of the tent ropes

² Gossip circulates around the horse enclosure.

12

¹ nang phu nu'i bar la gyod mi mdza'

² lug rgyu ma'i bar la gri mi mdza'

¹ Conflict between brothers is not good,

² Putting a knife into a mutton sausage is not good.

Quarrels within families or small tribal groups can lead to disunity or lack of solidarity, a matter which is always taken very seriously. Indeed, the principle of group loyalty is fundamental to the tribal organization of Amdo nomads and it was often referred to by my informants, particularly in the context of conflict. One headman in Machu, for example, told me that in a long-running pastureland dispute between his tribe and one of its neighbors, one of the smaller groups that made up his tribe refused to join in the hostilities, on the basis that its members had kin links with the neighboring tribe. He shook his head several times while recounting this sad fact to me

and used a phrase which I heard elsewhere, more than once:

13

tshang ma'i skyid sdug gcig red

Our happiness and sadness is the same (should be shared).

Implicit in the processes of feuding and mediation are notions of honor and dignity.⁹ The need for revenge, although often expressed as being the result of anger, is always implicitly associated with an affront to dignity that may have occurred through a raid or injury. Equally, a feud can only be brought to an end, or prevented from arising, if compensation is paid that satisfies the injured party's honor. Although the circumstances under which revenge can and should be taken are often asserted and are even made explicit in the written law code, the dangers of an over-emphasis on dignity and honor are also recognized.

14

¹ nang phu nu'i la rgya gtong dgos

² phyi sde bar la rgya 'dzin dgos

¹ (Be prepared to) let go of your dignity within your own family,

² (But) maintain your dignity in the face of other tribes.

Also reflecting tribal dynamics and structures are *tamxhwe* that discuss the position of the Golok headman *xhombo* (*dpon po*). All tribes have a headman *gowa* (*mgo ba*), but there is and was considerable variation in their status. Some were hereditary, presiding over a single group or a whole set of tribes, achieving the status of *rgyal po*

⁹ These are generally expressed, simply, in terms of anger, but the sentiments implied are complex (Pirie 2007).

(king), as in Sokwo (Sog po) and Ngawa (Rnga ba). In certain areas the monastery exercised administrative control and sent monks to be *gowa*, although sub-tribes might continue to appoint their own headmen, who advised the monastery's representative. In Golok there were three, supposedly related, ruling families, known as *xhombo*, who traced their ancestry back to three brothers. These families were primarily responsible for coordinating pastoral movements and religious ceremonies, for organizing their tribes at times of conflict or war and, crucially, for making peace. It was among the members of these families that were, and still are, the highest status mediators in Golok; individuals with a particular reputation for oratory. A number of these were among my most informative assistants.

15

¹ dpon chen tshig la or bshad med

² ri mtho brag la phyir ltas med

¹ A great *xhombo* does not change what he says,

² If you are on the rocks of a cliff you do not look back.

The following was related to me by a Tibetan in Hualong Hui Autonomous County, a farming area in the northeast of Amdo:

16

¹ gos chen snying na lhan pa mi nyan

² dpon po lhung na g.yog po mi nyan

¹ When fine clothes are worn out they cannot be used to make patches,

² *Xhombo* who fall (morally) cannot (even) become servants.

It was particularly interesting that I should have come across this in Hualong, an area at the opposite end of Amdo to Golok. From at least the nineteenth century it was dominated by representatives of the Qing administration and, subsequently, by Hui under Ma Bufang, who seized control in the first half of the twentieth century and now form the majority of the population. Hualong Tibetan *xhombo*, therefore, had considerably less status than elsewhere in Amdo. Nevertheless, the term *xhombo* obviously has metaphorical significance in a broad swath of Amdo.

The importance of resolving problems is a recurrent theme and I recorded a number of examples dealing specifically with conflict and its resolution:

17

¹ gyod ma bshad sems kyi mdzer ma yin

² bshad dang na chu kha'i wu ba yin

¹ An unresolved conflict will (remain like) a wart in your mind,

² Once resolved it becomes (fragile) like a (bubble) in a stream.¹⁰

18

¹ spyir na gyod bshad mi shes

² de'i nang gi mo gyod mi shes

¹ (If you) do not know how to resolve conflict,

² You do not know how to arrange a divorce.

¹⁰ I have not found the term *wu ba* in any dictionary. However, my assistant translated it as 'bubble' and Chandra Das (1998, 1,962) gives *wu rdo* as 'pumice stone', a rock which appears to contain bubbles.

19

¹ gyod mkhas pas bshad na gzhug gtsang

² gri rno pos brus na shal yag

¹ A skilful speaker will resolve a problem cleanly,

² A sharp knife will cut cleanly.

This last can, however, be contrasted with a short adage in the same book that seems to say the exact opposite:

20

gyod mkhas pas mi chod gces pas chod

If a problem cannot be solved with skill, then love and care will resolve it.

Many stress the difficulty of conflict resolution:

21

¹ bo'u shugs kyis 'phang ni ra

² gyod ngar gyi bshad ni med

¹ You cannot use your strength to fire a gun,

² You cannot use anger to mediate a conflict.

22

¹ gyod kyi nang la gshob mi 'gro

² mig gi nang spu mi 'gro

¹ A lie does not work in a lawsuit,

² A hair does not go into an eye.

The taking of oaths is occasionally central to the mediation process. If there is a conflict of evidence then the parties are invited to take an oath at a monastery. It is

assumed that no Tibetan would dare lie after taking an oath, out of fear of karmic consequences. Oaths can also be taken at the end of the mediation process to indicate respect for the agreement. The following relates to the oaths of witnesses:

23

¹ mis mi za no mna' red

² khyis mi za no lcags red

¹ What a man cannot eat is an oath,

² What a dog cannot eat is iron.

Other *tamxhwe* reflect on the important role of the mediator:

24

¹ gtam mi sha can de gzu ba'i lag

² shing 'dzer ma can de shing bzo'i lag

¹ Speaking about blood money is work for the *zowa*,

² Putting nails into wood is work for the carpenter.

25

¹ mig gcig gis A ma'i ngos bltas

² mig gcig gis rtsam khug thul (la) bltas¹¹

¹ With one eye you should look towards your mother,

² With one eye you should look at the *tsampa* bag.

It was explained to me that this is a metaphor for the *zowa*, who must listen to both sides.

The Golok law code, which has now been

¹¹ As written here there are too many syllables in the last line. My guess is that the *la* is a transcription error.

reproduced as part of the region's history, provides insight into the principles, ideologies, and morality that once underlay tribal relations in the area, in particular the inherent problems of warfare and mediation. It contains two examples of *tamxhwe*. One concerns group solidarity:

26

¹ po tho gcig la rdog gtad nas

² mdung yu gcig la mchil ma 'debs

¹ Step firmly on one spot (together),

² Spit on the handle of the spear (together).

The precise meaning of this is obscure both to me and my informants and assistants in Golok, but they were certain that it advocates solidarity and the benefits of collective action, implicitly at times of conflict. It is part of the second section of the laws, those concerned with making peace. The other maxim, found in the same section, concerns the important difference between voluntarily entering into a conflict and defending your own group from attack:

27

¹ dgra phar bkal pho rog mda' khur

² tshur bkal dge 'dun spyi khur

¹ If you go (away) to engage with the enemy (you are like)
a crow carrying (your own) arrow,

² If the enemy comes to engage with you (you are like) the
monk responsible for public property.

This is also somewhat obscure and it may be that the text omits one syllable from the second line. However, the meaning seems plain enough: initiating a conflict is your own responsibility, but if your group is attacked, you must act collectively. The same idea was repeated often by my

informants as a central principle of tribal organization—initiating conflict is dangerous and group solidarity is essential in defense.

More directly relevant to the mediation process were a number of conversations I had with *xhombo* in Golok. One recited two *tamxhwe* to me, both of which reflected the importance of good and skilful speech.

28

¹ bshad shes na gtam gi rgyan¹² yin

² bshad ma shes na gtam gi 'tshang

¹ If you speak well, what you say will be beautiful (like an ornament),

² If you cannot speak well, what you say will be full of errors.

29

¹ skya mi'i lam ma zad rgyu med

² sa bsam pa thon dus zad ni yin

³ rin chen gtam ma zad rgyu med

⁴ gtam mdo rtsa bzhag na zad ni yin

¹ The grey road never comes to an end,

² But when you find (arrive at) the place you like, it ends.

³ Valuable speech never comes to an end,

⁴ But if it gets to the root (of the problem) it ends.

Other *tamxhwe* were even more directly relevant to the process of mediation. One *xhombo* described the following as examples of what he would say when trying to persuade a reluctant party to accept a compromise:

¹² He actually spelled this for me as *rkyan* but *rgyan* makes more sense.

30

¹ gyod kyi sems kha gar gyi dka'

² mar gyi sgam kha gar gyi dka'

¹ You never get what you want during a dispute,

² A butter box is never full.

31

khyams pa rta rdang nang nas bsad kyang mi sha dgos

If you kill a vagrant among (implicitly, trying to steal) the horses tied up (in your encampment), you still have to pay compensation (blood money).

The principle is that someone responsible for causing an injury must pay compensation, even if the other party is in the wrong.

The following recognizes variations in customs between areas and tribes. The Golok tribes are proud of their autonomy. One *xhombo* told me, for example, that his tribe had its own customs, but when a conflict had erupted with a tribe in Gansu, three different Golok tribes, including his own, had combined in the offensive. As he told me, these three had traditionally combined and their joint reputation was at stake.

32

¹ lung bo re la dpe re

² sle bo re la lung re

¹ Each village (valley) has its own words (customs),

² Each basket has its own rope (handle).

A striking example, capturing the difficult situation in which Tibetans now find themselves as part of China and subject to its legal system, is:

¹ myi gcig gi steng la khrims gnyis

² rta gcig gi steng la sga gnyis

¹ One man subject to two laws,

² Is like a horse with two saddles.

In other words, being subject to both Chinese and Tibetan law is difficult. It is no answer to a claim for compensation that the perpetrator has been punished under the Chinese penal system; *khrims* (Tibetan law) must still be followed.¹³

TAMXHWE AS PART OF SOCIAL AND LEGAL PROCESSES

We can appreciate the tight construction of form in most of the proverbs and maxims given above. Each line has an equal number of syllables and the *tamxhwe* generally use parallel phrases, often repeating the same words or expressions in two different contexts, or using a similar sounding word with two different meanings. Some of them are wryly amusing or ironic, others whimsical and almost poetic; most avoid dull preaching or blunt exhortation.

Certain *tamxhwe* were, and still are, used within the mediation process and, as such, can be regarded as precursors to the forms of written law that develop in literate societies. As a number of anthropologists and historians have remarked, in a non-literate society the precedents and principles that can be appealed to as part of the dispute resolution process must largely be oral and memorable and often take the form of short, mnemonic

¹³ The significance of these dynamics and tensions in the contemporary world are the subject of other publications (Pirie 2005, forthcoming).

rhymes, jingles, or proverbs. In such societies dispute processes are often educative, or matters of performance or ritual (Just 2001), and thus markedly different from those in which a stronger, more centralized administration or judicial system is able to use written law as an instrument in the systematic administration of justice (Cheyette 1970, 1978; Clanchy 1970; Diamond 1973; Goody 1986). Although there is a rich and ancient literary tradition among Tibetans, until recently literacy remained relatively rare among the lay population, particularly in rural areas.

The oral nature of the *tamxhwe* also made them flexible tools in the context of mediation processes. As Clanchy (1970, 172) notes, this is typical of legal proceedings in non-literate societies. An aura of custom and historicity could be given to new principles or examples by presenting them as *tamxhwe*. It would, however, be wrong to equate such oral resources too closely with written law, as pointed out by Diamond (1973) and Goody (1986, 135), among others. In Golok, the *tamxhwe* existed alongside the written law codes which, although they did contain certain statements of moral principle, including the two examples of *tamxhwe* mentioned, primarily consisted of statements of quite a different nature: directions for the conduct of war and precise, detailed statements about the amounts of compensation that should be paid in different cases. These *khirms* were more general and abstract (rather than metaphorical and poetic) statements about status, equality, and loyalty. Being written, moreover, they acquired a measure of permanence and autonomy, which made them more symbolic than practical tools for achieving justice. The *tamxhwe*, on the other hand, were flexible tools, which could be adapted by mediators to promote a solution to the particular case at hand.

As well as being clear and memorable, however, some *tamxhwe* are enigmatic, apparently deliberately obscure, and my informants remained uncertain of their

meaning. The former must, therefore, have been useful, accessible proverbs and maxims, which could guide daily life, and which must have been readily comprehensible when invoked during a mediation process. The latter were more like rhetorical devices, designed to dazzle and confuse an opponent. When used by a mediator, they might also have had the effect of impressing upon both parties the skill and care that had gone into the formulation of the proposed solution. As Ekvall remarks, the mediators needed "devices and powers of argument, persuasion, cajolery, and appeal to self-interest to bring both sides to the point of agreement" (1964, 1140). They had to "appeal to high and moral principles and cite the preachments of religion ... Lengthy and sententious speech-making" was necessary to "help some tribal leader swallow his pride and say, 'Yes'" (1964, 1145–1146). The more elaborate the process seemed, the more refined and esoteric the language and argument, the easier it must have been for the parties to feel that their dignity was being properly recognized and to assent to the proposed solution on the basis that it satisfied honor.

Using *tamxhwe*, therefore, allowed a speaker to display his knowledge and skills of oratory. The advocate could use it to confound an opponent who had the misfortune to hail from a tribe beyond the boundaries of Golok, while a mediator could select the *tamxhwe* likely to persuade the parties to accept a compromise. It also allowed the mediator a measure of creativity, as can be seen in the nicely crafted example of the horse with two saddles, which expresses, with admirable succinctness, a major tension now felt in Tibetan areas of China.

It would be wrong, however, to employ the past tense when discussing *tamxhwe* and its uses. As I have described elsewhere (Pirie 2005, 2007), mediation processes are still very much alive in contemporary Golok and the mediators I talked to pride themselves on their oratory and ability to employ these sayings and proverbs. The horse

with two saddles is a modern creature, straddling two worlds; traditional and contemporary. As is evident from the many examples of conflict and mediation now taking place in Amdo, even the distinction between traditional and modern can be misleading. The people of Golok live in a world shaped by a multitude of influences, Chinese and Tibetan, ancient and modern, urban and rural, literate and oral, religious and secular, supportive and repressive. Their innovative use of *tamxhwe*, a skill in which they continue to take pride, exemplifies the creative ways in which they are responding to the complexities of the twenty-first century.

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SEATING, MONEY, AND FOOD AT
AN AMDO VILLAGE FUNERAL

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ABSTRACT

Seating, food, and money are discussed in the context of funerals held in the Amdo Tibetan village of Lo khog, located in Mar khu thang Town, Gcan tsha County, Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, PR China. An analysis of these three elements, combined with an intimate personal account of the funeral of the first author's close relative in 2005, offer insights into villagers' social status, and power and gender roles in their everyday lives.

KEY WORDS

Tibetan funerals, Amdo, social status, power, Qinghai, Rma lho, Huangnan

PERSONAL ACCOUNT (RIN CHEN RDO RJE)

"Rinchen..., Rinchen..." Mother wept, not finishing.

"Rinchen..." Sister grabbed the phone from Mother and broke in, but with much hesitation.

"Ah..." I said in a faltering voice

"Come home now. Father expected you to be in Do kyA today," she said.

"Okay..." I mumbled.

"Oh! Dbang rgyal left us. Left us forever," Sister said.

No sooner had I put on my shoes than I found myself going home. I took a seat next to the window at the very back of the bus. The bus window was half open. Cold air lashed in and stung my face. I felt somehow relieved of the pang I felt in my heart. Over the long trip, the swaying of the bus lulled me into childhood memories of his images, one after another. This deeply stirred me. Tears trickled down my cheeks. I hated that it was him, and not me.

The bus bound to Gcan tsha let me off at Gdung sna. I went to a local shop to buy three tea bricks, which is what people normally present at a funeral. Unwelcome weather restricted transportation on the dirt roads. It was impossible to hitch a ride uphill. I waited. I had no choice; I took a van to the county town just before dark.

I spent the night at the home of one of my maternal cousins. Cousin brought up the subject of our next day's ride to Do kyA soon after my first sip of tea.

"Don't worry about tomorrow's ride. We're all set," he said.

"Er..." I choked, my heart aching at the mention of Cousin's death.

"We'll set out before breakfast," he said.

"Okay," I murmured.

I huddled under one quilt with my two nephews, who slept soundly all night. I couldn't sleep. I kept tossing and turning as if nails were being driven into my back. I finally dozed off as darkness began to leave. But almost immediately, with my heart beating oddly, I woke, bathed in heavy sweat that drenched me from my head downwards. I felt strangled by some invisible force. I sat up in the bed for a moment then slipped out of the house.

At the doorstep, I heard Cousin cough who, I assumed, had awakened from the squeaks of the door shutting behind me. It was overcast. The street was empty except for some cleaners sweeping at the far end of the street.

Our jeep roared as it snaked its way along the dirt track up the mountain slope and we observed majestic A myes Srin po looming through the fog. A narrow plot of forest stretched along a ridge. A few adobe houses dotted the mid-part of the nearest hill, at whose base ears of crops rustled heavily in the wind.

One adobe house stood out, bustling with activity, brimming with people both in and outside the house. With hands pressed to their foreheads, a few among them stood to see our jeep parked on the trail overlooking Uncle's house. With red eyes, Father immediately climbed up to greet us. Seeing my presence, Father's sad face showed a faint smile. Cousin and two other visitors were relieved of their

mourning gifts and beckoned towards the house gate.

A few villagers squatted near the house gate with chunks of bread in their hands, silently eating. At the sight of us, they stood at once and smiled a welcome. Women baking bread on the other side of the courtyard paused and stood, but kept their heads down. The air around us was heavily laden with the odor of baking and incense. Father waved, signaling to a boy, who hurried inside with a kettle of tea for Cousin and his companions, who were seated on the white felt at the hearth. I lingered on the porch. Fingering prayer beads, Cousin's father approached and gently patted me on the shoulder. It was followed by an emotionally unbearable scene with Cousin's mother, helped by Cousin's older sister, approaching me, both sobbing. Perhaps, my presence reminded them of Cousin who was my age. Having lost her son, Cousin's mother abandoned herself to despair.

Hearing the sobbing, Cousin's grandfather instantly appeared and told Cousin's mother and older sister to resume chanting. Seeing me, he quickly brought out a wood tray of baked bread, and poured me some black tea. Cousin's grandmother and two younger sisters were kneeling and spinning prayer wheels in front of the room in which I knew Cousin remained all alone. From their grievously exhausted expressions, I could tell they must have been there doing so since the first glimmer of dawn.

I sat on a mat next to Aunt, who instructed me to chant mantra verses inscribed on a crumpled, oily piece of paper. As she did, I chanted as many as I could, and after each complete recitation I marked it by slipping a yellow knot over a bead. Brother

came and handed me a hand prayer wheel to spin, which I did the entire afternoon.

Every fifteen minutes, Cousin's grandfather's visit to Cousin's undisturbed room alternated with his serving guests and monks. During every visit, the room was fumigated and clean spring water was splashed on the floor so that there would be no unpleasant odor.

In the early afternoon, the return of clan members along with their much awaited news from visiting eminent monasteries pleased Father and Cousin's grandfather. Both then wore relaxed smiles. Shortly afterwards, with full concentration, they set to the task of making a stretcher in the attic.

The monks stayed and Father, my uncles, Brother, and I were lodged in the house of an uncle's friend for the night. We slept on a *he rdze*¹ in age-order. I slept on the outer edge under one quilt with Brother.

In the wee hours, Father tugged at our quilts for us to get up. We hurried over to Uncle's house where monks were chanting, sitting cross-legged on the *he rdze* while male villagers either sat cross-legged or kneeled at the hearth. The room was crowded with mourners, so I had to push my way to the central pillar. Kneeling directly behind Aunt, I repeated after Aunt and the others. Aunt sensed my presence and turned, and then dissolved into tears. I flung back my head and out of the corner of my eyes, I discerned figures moving into the undisturbed room. I realized it was time for them to take Cousin.

¹ A raised adobe platform, constantly heated by smoke from the stove that passes through channels in the platform, before finally emerging from a chimney.

The whole crowd began to troop out of the house. Some village elders attempted to close the door to prevent women from coming out and wailing. Cousin's grandmother and sister struggled their way out and were finally let through. Cousin's grandmother howled, "Son, come back and stay with us for Grandpa!"

On the roof, the crowd was being instructed and I instantly knew it was Father doing the talking. My uncles and brother, and Cousin's grandfather maneuvered Cousin out of the room and hurriedly up along the ladder where Father and several experienced villagers received the stretcher. It was then moved over the wall and gradually lowered bit by bit by the ropes fastened to it. Uncles were already waiting for Cousin at the foot of the wall outside. Brother was still on the roof and slipped down the wall for he worried he couldn't catch up with the uncles. I quickly climbed down the ladder, and flew through the door after them.

We trotted along the trail along the hillside. Soon we had to cut through a vast area of desolate fields. We planned our arrival at the funeral site to be before sunrise so vultures could feed on Cousin at the first instant of sunrise. I replaced Brother, lifting one of the front poles and ran along with the uncles, who were being replaced by village elders. Dew on lush grass sopped through my shoes. One foot slipped into a pit hidden in the grass. The pole slipped off my shoulder, but Brother's timely grasp meant the funeral procession proceeded without a pause. This gave me the chance to regain my footing. Half an hour later, we reached an open area on a hill where the distant mountains came into view. Cousin's grandfather examined a stone-paved

area marked by a prayer flag hoisted there. He waved away a few wandering yaks. The villagers remained about thirty steps away. Cousin was then stripped of the white cloth and blanket and turned on his stomach, face down. The uncles held out the white cloth as a screen. Cousin's body was immensely swollen and dark. Cousin's grandfather smudged Cousin with wheat flour so his body looked better, nevertheless, the crack on his back, the cause of his death, remained apparent. Cousin's grandfather put cousin's palms so that they grasped each other, and crossed his ankles. He sighted along Cousin's spine to the mountain pass in the far distance, believing that was the way out for him. He pulled bread out of his robe pouch and scattered crumbs all around Cousin.

He said, his voice cracking with grief, "Son, you are blessed forever. I've made the way for you. I'll chant hundreds of millions of *ma N²* and light hundreds of millions of butter lamps for you. Don't fear. Don't look back. Rest in peace. Don't worry about the family. Find yourself a better home."

Except for Cousin's grandfather and Father, we all left at Father's suggestion that vultures might not fly down in fear of our presence. The crowd of villagers who had stayed in a circle around a blazing pile of dry bushes joined us as we climbed down along the trail. As the sun rose, and before we disappeared round a sharp curve, I looked back and caught sight of a few vultures hovering above Cousin.

At the dooryard of Cousin's home, two villagers waited with a kettle of lukewarm water and

² The six sacred syllables *aoM ma Ni pad + me h'uM*.

another kettle of lukewarm water mixed with a little milk that we rinsed our hands with. Lukewarm water was used first and milky water next. We then stepped over a smoldering pile of straw set in front of the threshold. Village elders were beckoned to climb through the window onto the *he rdze* while others were seated at the hearth.

Father, the uncles, Brother, and I had a separate room for a late breakfast. We were served a basin full of *rtsam pa*,³ plates of sugar and butter, and another basin full of baked bread. The uncles fed themselves quietly, but only a little food was eaten. Brother and Aunt drank tea squatting outside the door. Father made a chunk of *rtsam pa* and passed it to me across the table. I refused. I had no appetite. Whatever I ate or drank smelled of Cousin. In order not to rouse their attention, I snuck out of the room.

I sat on the edge of the threshing ground overlooking a cluster of adobe homes at the bottom of the forested valley. The village was silent except for barking dogs chained at several doors. A line of village women carrying buckets brimming with water trudged up the hill to Cousin's home. I hung my head in despair. Cold air tousled my hair. Fourth Uncle flopped down next to me and rolled tobacco in a piece of newspaper. He inhaled deeply as he smoked. Staring into the distance, he heaved a long sigh.

Out of the blue, Brother's cry on the roof drew my attention to flocks of vultures hovering high overhead, darkening the sky. Everyone's face lit

³ Roasted barley flour mixed with butter, dried cheese, and hot tea. It also refers to flour made from roasted barley.

up at the sight. It was almost noon when we caught sight of two dots on the hill—Cousin's grandpa and Uncle coming home.

Cousin's grandpa sipped tea as Cousin's father sat dejectedly and quietly on the porch. They both seemed not to have exchanged even a word on the way home. Cousin's grandpa remained chanting *ma Ni*, both of his hands busy counting beads and simultaneously, spinning a hand prayer wheel. Uncle slid his string of prayer beads over his left wrist and hurried inside to serve visitors.

In late afternoon, since major affairs had been taken care of, Father, the uncles, Brother, Aunt, and I got ready to leave. Before we all sat in a tractor-trailer, Father held his index finger under Uncle's nose and said vehemently, "If you start drinking again, I'll spit in your face."

Glaring at him, Cousin's grandpa added, "And besides, you won't be a part of this family."

Uncle wore a stern look on his pale, tired face and made a solemn oath that he would never drink so much as even a sip of liquor. Father and Cousin's grandpa were further convinced as he manifested unshakable resolve by raising his right palm.

Somehow, Uncle was blamed for Cousin's death. Every so often, he would be gone for a long time, and then return, always drunk. During those stays, he drank alone or was with some fellow villagers who were notorious drunkards. Mom said Cousin had learned these bad habits from Uncle.

Cousin was like my brother and a son of my family. He was a constant source of my childhood joy. I miss those times filled with our laughter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a plethora of publications on Tibetan funerals, e.g., a Google search on 'Tibetan funerals' produced 1,100 hits on November 20, 2007, that also included related video offerings on www.youtube.com. In the academic sphere, Tibetan imperial funeral customs, cultural assumptions attached to different funeral rites, and various ritual aspects have enjoyed popularity within the corpus of Tibetan funeral studies, e.g., Jiao and Hu (2003) and Chu's (1991) attempt to verify the existence and meaning of animal and human sacrifices during the era of the Tibetan Empire. Similar subjects were discussed in Ciwang's (2003) work.

Ancient Tibetan funerals are treated in a number of ways. Ying and Sun (2007) and Jiao and Chen (2003), for example, argue that the ancient practice of sky funerals (i.e., those which precede the earth burials of Tibetan imperial times) originated in Tibet. The authors argue that sky funerals functioned to reinforce kings' divine authority. They argue that the corpses of the first seven Tibetan kings were actually placed in inaccessible spots in the mountains where vultures fed on them. This was done in the fear that common Tibetans would learn the truth, i.e., that the kings died like everybody else. The mortality of kings first became evident when the misnamed King Gri gum btsan po (literally 'sword die emperor')—was killed in a public duel. This destroyed the notion that the kings were heavenly beings that went from Heaven to earth via a *dmu thag* 'rope'. The same authors suggest that the events just described explain the beginnings of earth burial and that the later sky funeral was the revitalized form of old sky funerals but altered by Buddhist belief. Jiao and Chen (2003) also acknowledge strong influence of Zoroastrianism on both Indian and old Tibetan sky funerals.

Zhang (in Geng 2004) concludes that earth burial was once common prior to the brief period of cremation, which was denied common Tibetans. Cremation, it was believed, brought one's soul into Heaven. Common Tibetans desired the same thing, i.e., the ascent of their souls into Heaven and thus adopted sky funerals from India, which epitomized the Buddhist notion of selflessly giving to others. Tai and Tao (in Geng 2004) conclude that sky funerals conform to the Bon notion that the deceased's soul will be taken to Heaven after it is eaten by vultures, i.e., the soul is carried to Heaven by the vultures.

Another prominent idea for the origin of sky funerals is such Buddhist narratives as 'The Body Offering to the Tigress' that tells of a prince offering his body to a starving tigress and her cubs. The body parts that remained were then cremated. There is incongruity in the idea that sky funerals are developed from a Buddhist notion that advocates cremation. Tai and Tao (in Geng 2004) suggest it was improbable that earth burial was once the primary form of burial in Tibet, since digging earth was a deeply entrenched taboo for Tibetans.

Geng's (2004) study of Tibetan funeral literature leads him to conclude that the outcome of related research differs mainly in what funeral type came first and cultural assumptions behind death rituals, and that the conflicts and different conclusions in such studies are such that Tibetan funerals need much more scholarly scrutiny.

A major flaw in work on Tibetan funerals, and Tibetan studies in general, is the notion that Tibetans are a single, homogenous people and culture. For example, studies on Tibetan dialects have described more than fifty separate dialects of Tibetan.⁴ Presumably, this linguistic

⁴ See Sun (2003) for an example and bibliography on Tibetan dialectology.

diversity is related to some degree of cultural diversity. In addition, Turin (2007) has suggested that, given that the Himalayan region contains one sixth of the world's languages, it should be considered a linguistic and cultural 'mega center'. Such observations raise questions as to how funeral activity in a particular local area represents the entirety of the Tibetan peoples. For instance, Derongzerendengzhu (1998, 810) wrote that in the Tibet Autonomous Region, relatives, neighbors, and villagers bring cash, grain, Tibetan barley liquor, and other items to the concerned family. However, in many Tibetan areas, such as the village that is the focus of this study, barley liquor is banned on funeral occasions.

A regional perspective is also employed, e.g., Bstan 'dzin dge legs' (1999) describes how, in the Tibet Autonomous Region, gifts of Buddhist icons and *thang kha*⁵ are presented to the '*pho ba gnang mkhan* lama.⁶ It is only briefly noted that feasts are offered to religious specialists and butter lamps are offered to the local monasteries. The suggestion is that what is described typifies all funerals throughout the vast Tibet Autonomous Region. The same tendency to generalize is found in Snyan bzang pa dge 'dun (2007), Gesangben and Gazangcaidan (2000), Liang (1993), and Liu (1991).

Bstan 'dzin dge legs (1999) suggests that presenting *thang kha* is the finest gift (throughout the entire Tibet Autonomous Region). In contrast, pieces of white felt and tea brick are obligatory gifts in Lo khog Village, with felt being particularly important. Likewise, Que (2005) asserts that water burial is for people at the bottom of a

⁵ A deity image on a cloth scroll.

⁶ The '*pho ba gnang mkhan* lama is responsible for guiding the deceased's soul to a next life. The term *sngas mgo* lama is also used in certain Amdo areas.

community's social strata; Gele et al. (2004) describes water burial as being only for people who experienced unnatural death in northern Tibet; and Du and Cui (2007) assert 'Tibetan' water burial is done to feed water deities and do not provide a specific timeframe for their assertions. In Lo khog, the situation is entirely different—water burial is the norm.

Certain funeral studies, e.g., Cui (2007), Bagaicuo (2005), Blackburn (2005), Shneiderman (2002), Ling (2000), Rinchen (1991), and Skorupski (1982) are ritual-oriented and fleetingly mention offerings and gifts that are an integral part of funerals; they make no mention of seating and expenditures. Brauen's (1982) work describes death customs in Ladakh in general and examines gift-giving in some detail, but barely mentions seating and food. Similarly, Ramble (1982) focuses on funeral rituals as means of expressing social status in Klu brag Tibetan Village in the Muktinath area of South Mustang, Nepal. Ramble describes drink offerings presented to the deceased in effigy; gives passing reference to lamas being paid in food, drinks, and cash; and mentions that villagers are fed twice (without detail) and given grain. Seating is not mentioned. Liang (1993) elaborates details on offerings to the deceased, but gives few details on food, gift-giving, and seating in Yul shul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Liu (1991) also describes the same elements in Sherpa communities, but seating goes unnoticed. Gesangben and Gazangcaidan (2000) describe funerals in Tibet, at times with fleeting mention of offerings, gifts, and food in some particular places. However, none of these describe these three elements together.

'Tibetan Studies' as a field of inquiry has long made certain assumptions about Tibetan society and areas. As already mentioned, one of these (erroneous) assumptions is that there is such similarity in Tibetan customs across the

enormous Tibetan cultural area that the results of a study in one area automatically represents the much larger 'cultural Tibet'. A second assumption is that the more complex a ritual, especially if it uses intricate religious texts and exotic religious implements, the more worthy of study it is. These and other such notions have prioritized Tibetan culture in a way that has nearly made certain elements of funerals that are of critical importance to ordinary Tibetans nearly invisible, e.g., the foods that are prepared and served, how people are seated at funerals, and the funeral economy.

The literature suggests that Tibetan funeral studies are characterized by a focus on rituals, complex religious elements, and on broad generalizations. Consequently, other ritual elements such as the themes discussed in this paper are rendered invisible. This study, unlike many previous publications, deals with elements on a specific, local level that are most relevant to ordinary Tibetan villagers. With the death of village elders in charge of such village rituals, many elements described in this paper will cease to be practiced within a decade or so. In order to preserve the diversity of culture that exists between Tibetan communities, more such detailed studies need to be carried out, before this variety is lost.

METHODOLOGY

This paper focuses on seating, money, and food relating to funerals in Lo khog Village and, in so doing, provides detailed description of these three important elements and how they relate to the larger community from a local perspective. This is done in the context of a contemporary version of a Tibetan village funeral amid rapidly changing Tibetan culture in the early twenty-first century. Semi-structured interviews and experiential data on the recent

(2005, 2007) deaths of two of the first author's immediate relatives are used, revealing how villagers feel about funeral participation. The formal introduction to the paper provides detail about the ordinary life of its inhabitants, thus providing a setting for the more detailed description of funeral process and, within that context, seating, money, and food. These are the three major elements that are strongly associated with lived experience of ordinary Tibetan villagers and that can best reflect a rich culture concerning villagers' social status, power, and gender roles in their everyday life.

VILLAGE INTRODUCTION

Lo khog Village lies in Gcan tsha County's main valley, four kilometers north of the county seat, Mar khu thang Town, where two rivers⁷ from Srin po Mountain empty into the Rma chu (Yellow River). The village comprises ninety-one Tibetan households with a population of approximately 600 Tibetans.

Cultivating wheat on irrigated, terraced fields is the mainstay of the local economy. About one-tenth of the fields are planted with potatoes, rapeseed, and barley. The best land produces 400 kilograms of wheat per *mu*.⁸ The very limited land means that beans (for animal feed in winter) are not cultivated. Instead, wheat is exchanged for beans in such nearby mountain villages as Nya mo, Rstag 'a gong, and Lha sa. The majority of the land is irrigated with water from streams diverted from nearby rivers, which runs through the fields in ditches. Over 200 *mu* of land was abandoned in the 1990s because its location does not allow

⁷ Neither the valley nor the two rivers have specific names.

⁸ One *mu* = 0.067 hectares or 0.16 acres.

for irrigation and the subsequent low yields did not justify the effort that went into cultivation.

Most families own a mule, a few donkeys, and several cows. Mules are used as both plough- and pack-animals, while donkeys serve only the latter purpose. About ten households own forty to fifty goats and a few sheep. Their hair is used to make felt and is also sold for cash.⁹

Villagers sell grain when they are in urgent need of money and in daily life. They exchange grain for leeks, green chilies, potatoes, beans, starch noodles, brown sugar, salt, oranges, aluminum pots, metal buckets, steamers, strainers, vinegar, soy sauce, mutton, beef, pork, and farming implements with Han businessmen who transport the above items in small trucks to the village and then drive slowly along village lanes, shouting the names of their goods. These Han peddlers will accept grain as payment, while in the county town, only cash payment is accepted. This, along with the convenience, makes doing business with the traders who come to the village attractive. It is rare for Tibetans to do such business.

THE *BDUN PA SA*¹⁰ AND THE *SNGAS MGO* LAMA¹¹

The *bdun pa sa* (see Appendix One for an explanation of all non-English terms) are a group of seven monks that are

⁹ In 2007, one kilogram of hair sold for eight RMB.

¹⁰ This local Tibetan term literally translates as 'seven (monks)' and refers to a group of seven monks.

¹¹ Literally translated as 'pillowside lama' (the head of a bed where a pillow is placed), this particular lama sits by the deceased's bed next to the pillow supporting the corpse's head and says prayers. Sometimes he says the prayers into the ear of the deceased.

invited from the largest and closest monasteries¹² (Appendix Two gives a summary of the entire funeral process) immediately after a death. They chant *Bla mchod*, *Sman bla*, *Smon lam*,¹³ and *Kun rig rnam par snang mdzad*, which are believed to remove the sins of the deceased and assist them in finding a favorable incarnation in the next life. This chanting is a tradition adopted from Bde chen Monastery that traces its origin to 'bras spung Monastery in Lha sa. The monks sit on a large piece of white felt underlain with two pieces of black felt on the *he rdze* (see Appendix Three for a map of a house showing seating arrangements). The deceased remains in an undisturbed room and is offered every meal including milk tea, *rtsam pa*, both fried and baked bread, *sha khu*,¹⁴ 'bras nyog,¹⁵ *mchod*,¹⁶ yogurt, and fruits, which are placed on the table near the corpse that also has at least three lit butter lamps placed in front of scriptures (see Appendix Four for the cost of these and other necessary funeral items).

After the *bdun pa sa* have completed their activities, which require four to five days, a *sngas mgo* lama is invited. At times, the *sngas mgo* lama arrives when the *bdun ba sa* are still chanting, in which case the *sngas mgo* lama sits on a stack of three pieces of white felt topped with a carpet on the upper part of the *he rdze*, while the *bdun pa*

¹² Bde chen, Brag, Mgur, Ko'u, Ngang rong, Gsang sgrog, and Lha ri monasteries.

¹³ 'phags pa bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam.

¹⁴ Noodles cooked with a generous amount of meat. Such a meal for each monastery cost approximately 1,580 RMB in 2007.

¹⁵ Cooked rice mixed with sheep fat, jujubes, and sugar. Raisins and butter might be added.

¹⁶ Soup with clear starch noodles, meat, potatoes, and a small amount of green chili.

sa occupy the other parts of the *he rdze*. The *sngas mgo* lama may also be seated in the prayer room.¹⁷ The *sngas mgo* lama is given a piece of white felt worth one hundred RMB, 300-1,500 RMB in cash, three tea bricks, a *kha btags*,¹⁸ and a *bzo 'go*¹⁹ of silk. Often, a quilt or blanket, a piece of white felt, a tea kettle, a scoop, three *thab rdo*,²⁰ and an aluminum pot containing a half kilo each of rice, wheat flour, barley flour, butter, and dried cheese are added. This addition is initially offered for the deceased for their journey to their afterlife. At times, both *phrug* and *tsha ru*²¹ are added to the gifts. The exact nature of gifts varies according to location and even from home to home. Offering flexibility depends on the concerned family's financial condition.²²

Each *bdun pa sa* is given fifty RMB in cash, a piece of bread baked in heated earth, and a tea brick. The *sngas*

¹⁷ The *sngas mgo* lama may also be invited to direct a living person's soul two or three years before their death.

¹⁸ A strip of silk presented as a sign of respect to individuals, to deity images, to sacred trees, etc. One *kha btags* cost four to eight RMB and one tea brick cost five to nine RMB in 2007.

¹⁹ Enough fabric to make a robe.

²⁰ Stones for building a hearth. Three stones are used to support a kettle or pot on a trip.

²¹ *Phrug* or *phrug lwa* refers to a thin woolen cloth robe while a *tsha ru* is a lambskin robe.

²² Bstan 'dzin dge legs (1999, 551) reports that in the Tibet Autonomous Region, the *sngas mgo* lama, known as the *'pho ba gnam mkhan* lama, is presented silk, cash, and a gilded (or bronze or clay) icon of Shakyamuni. The latter is considered the finest gift. If such offerings are too expensive, a *thang kha* is presented. Poor families offer a certain amount of cash and several *kha btags*.

mgo lama and *bdun pa sa* are offered meat, sugar, butter, and *rtsam pa* during their stay. In total, a visit as described above requires the following items for feeding the lama and monks (888 RMB in value):

Figure One: Lama and monks' food expenditure.

Item	Amount	RMB Per	Total RMB
sugar	3.5 kg	5.00	17.50
<i>rtsam pa</i>	6.5 kg	1.60	10.40
butter	15.0 kg	24.00	360.00
sheep carcass	1	500.00	500.00

Frequently, more chanting is suggested by the *sngas mgo* lama or *bdun pa sa*. If so, the concerned family turns to tantric specialists or *dge bo*,²³ who chant such scriptures as 'pho lung, Bkra shis brtsegs pa, Sman bla'i stong mchod, Gzungs 'dus, and Mdo for the next two or so days in the home of the deceased on the *he rdze*. They are not paid since they are from the same village.

'od dpag med stong mchod²⁴ is chanted by another group of monks in the deceased's home two to three days after the death. Sons, brothers, and cousins assist during the ritual. Requirements include 1,000 lit butter lamps (seventy kilograms of butter), 1,000 bowls of water, 1,000 bowls of barley (seventy-five to eighty kilograms of barley), and

²³ A former monk.

²⁴ This ceremony is performed so that Amitābha, the Buddha of Limitless Light, will show the way for the deceased who otherwise might become lost on their journey at the end of which the deceased begins their next life.

1,000 *lha bshos*²⁵ (150 kilograms of *rtsam pa*) on the offering tables before the monks. The chanting is completed in a day, but the offering lasts for almost two entire days. Typically, a family borrows lamps from the village shrine so as to have the necessary lamps. Thirty minutes are required for the lamps to burn out and then new ones are offered. Two days is required to burn the seventy kilograms of butter. Similarly, bowls are also borrowed from the village shrine for the offerings of water and barley. Every thirty minutes or so, the water and the barley are removed and fresh water and barley are added. This explains why two days are needed. Each monk is paid fifty RMB in cash, a piece of bread, a tea brick, and a *kha btags*.

The Sman bla'i stong mchod chanting ceremony may be conducted preceding one's death, but only when a person is on their deathbed. It requires the same items as described above. This chanting beseeches prayers from the God of Medicine or Sman bla, who eases the deceased's pain on their deathbed.

VISITS

Villagers visit the concerned family soon after hearing of the death. They bring a piece of bread baked in heated earth, a tea brick, or both as a token of their concern for the family. Relatives and sons or daughters who married out often bring loads of barley or wheat grain on pack animals ranging from 150 to 500 kilograms in amount. Those with official jobs bring 100-1,000 RMB in cash. A sheep carcass

²⁵ Such sacrificial objects made of *rtsam pa* as butter lamps and pyramids.

or a sheep stomach full of butter²⁶ may complement the cash offering.²⁷

A clan member records the gifts. The name of the father of the household presenting the gift is recorded, as well as the gift. These gifts pile up on the porch on the bare ground. Two or three clan members seat the visitors in the home of the bereaved. Elders sit on white felt on the *he rdze* while younger adult men sit on black felt at the hearth in the living room. Some elders may sit on white felt at the head of the row when the *he rdze* is fully occupied. Old women sit on the bare dirt floor at the hearth across from adult men. Some younger adult women may join the old women. Most adult women either squat or kneel on the porch. All visitors are served black tea, fried bread, butter, and *rtsam pa*.²⁸

Visitors from outside the village are seated on pieces of white felt at the head of the row at the hearth and are served butter, *rtsam pa*, and black tea. When they leave the bereaved home, each is given a bowlful of tea leaves wrapped in white cloth.

Sons, brothers, and cousins of the deceased travel to and beseech prayers from such major monasteries (see Appendix Five for details of monasteries visited by the bereaved family) in the county as Bde chen, Mgur, and Brag, whose monks then chant scriptures such as Smon lam

²⁶ A sheep stomach full of butter cost 350-450 RMB in 2007.

²⁷ Derongzerendengzhu (1998, 810) writes that relatives, neighbors, and villagers bring cash, grain, liquor, and so on to the concerned family in Tibet. Gele et al. (2004, 361) report that when relatives in the Tibet Autonomous Region hear the news of the death, they bring money, butter, and even animals.

²⁸ Lamas, monks, and men are served at tables while women and children are offered food by a few clan members.

and Kun rig rnam par snang mdzad for the better passage of the deceased's soul. Each monk in the approached monasteries is given a piece of bread and five to ten RMB in cash; the monks are also given *sha khu* at noon of the day these representatives visit. This is known as *mang ja*. Overall, such expenses include 450-500 pieces of baked bread²⁹ and 2,250 to 5,000 RMB in cash.³⁰

If the deceased is a child, village children are given candies in the hope they will pray for the deceased.

Children may also be given candy when an adult dies, but it is less common than when the deceased is a child.

SKAR MA

A *sngas mgo* lama determines the day, known as *skar ma*,³¹ for disposal of the corpse.³² During *skar ma*, male elders sit

²⁹ Bread alone required 300-350 kilograms of wheat flour, worth 420-490 RMB in 2007.

³⁰ Half of the deceased's property in the Tibet Autonomous Region is given to the Potala Palace while the other half is sold and the proceeds used to pay for meals for monasteries and given to poor people (Danzhu'angben, 2002, 246). In Nag chu, certain of the deceased's property such as bowls and tools are kept at home while such articles as clothes are given to corpse cutters, known as *gtegs ldan*, beggars, or specialists who chisel *ma Ni* on rocks (Gele et al. 2004, 362).

³¹ A ritual during which the corpse is removed from the home.

³² Silk and some cash are sent to the *rtsis pa* 'diviner' to choose an auspicious day for burial in the Tibet Autonomous Region (Bstan 'dzin dge legs, 1999, 552).

on the *he rdze* while younger adult men sit at the hearth. Female relatives of the deceased kneel at the doorway of the living room. Before the corpse is removed from the home, male villagers are served *sha khu*. Upon their return from the site where the corpse was left, they each receive a bowlful of tea leaves wrapped in white cloth and a fist-sized chunk of *rtsam pa*.

Bdun pa sa preside over *ma Ni* prayer chanting, which may also be conducted by village monks, nuns, and *dge bo* who are unpaid. They sit on white felt at the hearth and occasionally on the *he rdze*. They chant passages of *mgur*³³ employing long phrases that have initial grace ornaments. This chanting is accompanied by the playing of religious instruments—the *Da ru*,³⁴ a small two-faced drum with attached strikers, and *dril bu* 'bell'. The mostly female mourners, the majority of whom are also members of the funeral procession, kneel and face the specialists to sing the chorus *aoM ma Ni pad + me h'uM* after each verse is recited by the specialists. Their chanting is sung in unison, employing long undulating phrases. This ceremony takes place prior to removal of the corpse from the bereaved home and better ensures a good next life.

VILLAGE MEALS, BORROWED UTENSILS, AND OTHER NECESSITIES

One or two days after the death, a large adobe stove is built by clan members in the courtyard of the house of the deceased. Women make dough and men fry it. A whole day is spent doing this. At the same time, a group of clan members are assigned to grind two tractor-trailers of wheat

³³ 'Songs of spiritual realization'—see Sujata 2005.

³⁴ *Da (ma) ru*.

grain in a mill in such nearby communities as Gle chen and Mar khu thang. The people involved are served butter and *rtsam pa* for lunch, and *sha khu* for supper. They do not expect nor do they receive any payment since they are from the same clan. About two and a half kilograms of butter and ten kilograms of *rtsam pa* are eaten for lunch by clan members at work. Another entire day is spent by clan women baking bread in heated earth. The same amount of butter and *rtsam pa* just described are also required for this day.

All villagers are offered tea and fried bread at the bereaved home the morning of the following day. This is always extended to two to three days. Male elders sit on the *he rdze* while younger adult men sit at the hearth. Women and children sit in the courtyard. At noon, the meal alternates between *'bras nyog* and *mchod*. In the evening, they are served *sha khu*. The cost for each of the two to three days is approximately 500 RMB.³⁵

Generally, fifty kilograms of butter (1,000 RMB) is purchased either from Rma lho or Rtse khog counties. In most cases, the family has an adequate supply of *rtsam pa*—fifty to one hundred kilograms. Certain poor families are loaned *rtsam pa* by rich families, who expect them to return what they borrow when they experience a death in their families.

Two or three clan members stand at the doorway during the communal meal and dole out a share of food for

³⁵ Fried bread requires seventy-five kilograms of rapeseed oil (900 RMB) and 300 kilograms of wheat flour (720 RMB). Baked bread requires 250 kilograms of wheat flour (600 RMB). *'bras nyog* requires seventy-five kilograms of rice (300 RMB), fifteen kilograms of fat (150 RMB), seven and a half kilogram of sugar (thirty RMB), and fifteen kilograms of jujubes (100 RMB).

absent members to their relatives who have come. Each absent villager is given a slice of baked bread, two pieces of fried bread in the morning, a ladle of *'bras nyog* or *mchod*, one *mar lo*³⁶ at noon, and two ladles of *sha khu* in the evening.

Bowls, basins, buckets, spoons, black felt, and tables are borrowed from clan members. When these articles are returned, the clan members receive a few slices of baked bread mixed with fried bread.

Communal pots from the village shrine are borrowed and then returned with at least a half tea brick in each. All village families are each given an earth-baked bread and tea brick at the end of the two or three days of village meals offered by the family of the deceased. This is the minimum an ordinary concerned family offers. Wealthy families might give in addition, seven and a half kilograms of rice, fifteen kilograms of wheat flour, a half kilogram of butter, and ten to fifteen RMB in cash to each village family.

FASTING

Fasting, mostly by women, lasts for two to three days and begins with a session of chanting called *gso sbyong* by tantric specialists or *dge bo* at five a.m. for about half an hour. They sit on pieces of white felt, make *lha bshos*, and light butter lamps. This ritual requires six to seven and a half kilograms of *rtsam pa* and nearly one kilogram of butter. The total value of this amounts to 200 RMB. Fasting villagers are served only black tea or *ring ja* in the morning. At noon, they are served butter and *rtsam pa*. This meal is called *bzom tsa*. For only this meal, seven and a half to ten

³⁶ It literally translates as 'butter leaf', which describes its size and shape.

kilograms of butter and twenty-five kilograms of *rtsam pa* are eaten.³⁷ In the evening, they are only served black tea. They continue to fast the next day. Those fasting must not utter a single syllable. At the dawn of the third day, the fast is broken by a meal of *thor thug* (two and a half kilograms of roasted wheat flour cooked in a pot full of milk) and next, either *sha khu* or meat-stuffed dumplings. Before they leave, they are each given a tea brick, a piece of baked bread, and five RMB in cash. The monks or *dge bo* are each given a tea brick, a piece of baked bread, and ten RMB in cash, which is always double of what fasting villagers are given.

REBIRTH AND DUS RAN³⁸

For the first seven weeks after death, the deceased's soul roams in Bar do, the state between birth and death. The concerned family and close relatives abstain from recreational gatherings. Butter lamps are lit and chanting by the concerned family members is done continually. On the forty-ninth day, villagers are sure that the deceased has been reborn.³⁹ Fasting takes place again and requires exactly the

³⁷ 220-280 RMB in value in 2007.

³⁸ The first anniversary of the deceased's death.

³⁹ Bstan 'dzin dge legs (1999, 569-570) reports that forty-nine days after a death in the Tibet Autonomous Region, a lama and monks are invited to chant at the deceased's home. All the relatives are present to celebrate the rebirth of the deceased. Gilded copper, silver, bronze, or clay icons; *thang kha*; and miniature *thang kha* are displayed. Relatives present scarves and make offerings for the deceased. Lamas and monks are offered the warmest hospitality and a celebration is held for the relatives for their help up to the

same expense. Several monks may be invited to chant and they are given the same amount of gifts as the *bdun pa sa*. Once again local major monasteries are visited and offered butter lamps. Some rich families visit the *sngas mgo* lama, who ensures the ascent of one's soul, and present 100 RMB, a tea brick, a piece of bread, and a *kha btags*.

On Dus ran, a person from each village household is invited to the home of the deceased and served *sha khu*. At least three prayer flags are attached to the poles on A ma Sman btsun, A myes Cha tshang,⁴⁰ and Brag Monastery.⁴¹

Water burial, sky funerals, and cremation are practiced locally. Water burial is the most common in

day of the deceased's rebirth. On behalf of the concerned family, relatives visit nearby temples and present an assembly of offerings and buy new offering bowls to replace old ones. Some particular monasteries are provided a meal, and at the same time, neighborhood beggars are given food. Gele et al. (2004, 360-361) write that in Nag chu, the chanting lasts for forty-nine days in total. Butter lamps are lit, and *rtsam pa*, tea leaves, and fried bread are offered to the deceased for forty-nine days. Rich families may give a bull or a sheep to rock carvers to chisel the six sacred syllables on rocks in a spot previously indicated by the deceased or chosen by family members after a death.

⁴⁰ A ma Sman btsun is a considered to be a mountain and a high ranking female deity who Lo khog villagers compare to a caring, protective mother. This mountain is in front of the village. A round trip to A ma Sman btsun requires half a day at a fast walk. A myes Cha tshang is the *skyes lha* 'natal deity', and the mountain where this deity resides is behind Lo khog Village. Two hours on foot is required to reach the mountaintop.

⁴¹ A strip of prayer flag cost seven RMB in 2007.

communities along the Yellow River while sky funerals are common for mountain communities.

BURIAL AND FUNERAL METHODS

Respectable and knowledgeable elders and old monks are cremated. Water disposal is currently the most common current form of funeral for villagers, replacing the older form of sky funeral. Those with higher social positions, power, and wealth receive a grander and more expensive funeral. Following is a description of each type of burial/funeral.

Water Burial

Water burial is simple. The corpse is wrapped in either a blanket or white cloth and is then placed inside a *phrug* or *tsha ru*. On *skar ma*, the corpse is carried on a stretcher by the sons, brothers, and male cousins of the deceased to the Yellow River. The rest of the funeral procession, mainly fellow villagers, follows. On the riverbanks, two or three connected ropes are looped around the waists of the sons, brothers, and male cousins while the ends are held in the grips of other members of the funeral procession. They carry the corpse and wade into the river until water reaches their chins and then they let the corpse drift away with the current. Sometimes, the piece of white felt that is fastened on the stretcher is also dumped into the river.

Cremation

Cremation is an elaborate procedure. A knowledgeable monk or a tantric specialist studies several places and then settles on a site that is auspicious in some respect, e.g., a place that is bereft of any pollution and that is geographically/ geomantically ideal for the deceased. The chosen place is often a spot in a field on the village outskirts. Today, this procedure is omitted. When constructing a stupa and a '*bum khang*',⁴² this geomantic study is done very carefully. The family usually chooses the place the deceased should be cremated. A mason, who is paid fifty RMB in cash, a piece of baked bread, and a tea brick, is invited to the designated spot to build a stupa-like *bsang khri* 'cremation oven' in which the corpse is cremated.

Very early in the morning of *skar ma*, the *sngas mgo* lama proceeds to the site and chants Thar mdo and Smon lam. He is seated on a *khri* or a throne comprised of three pieces of white felt topped with a blanket and a flower image at the back. He is accompanied by three monks who chant and sit on white felt underlain by two pieces of black felt. Another monk hands offering ingredients to the lama, who consecrates them, returns the now-consecrated items to the monk who, in turn, gives them to a member of the concerned family and demonstrates what to do with them. A basin and a bowl of each of the following offering ingredients are placed on a long narrow table near the lama.

⁴² A square structure that contains thousands of deity icons molded from clay.

Figure Two: Burnt offering ingredient expenditure.

Item	Amount	RMB per	Total RMB
Sesame seeds	7.5 kg	7.00	52.50
Wheat	7.5 kg	1.60	12.00
Barley	7.5 kg	1.60	12.00
White beans	7.5 kg	2.00	15.00
White mustard seeds	7.5 kg	6.00	45.00
<i>So ba</i> ⁴³	7.5 kg	1.60	12.00
Rice	7.5 kg	3.20	24.00
<i>'on bu</i> ⁴⁴	100 pieces		
<i>Ku sha</i> ⁴⁵	1 bundle		

Seven and a half kilograms of each grain is required. The latter two items are always procured from the local mountains. Fifteen kilograms of butter are melted in a pot near the funeral proceedings. Melted butter is periodically poured into the cremation stupa to make a hotter fire.

About ten minutes after the fire has begun burning in the cremation stupa, the funeral procession leaves and returns to the deceased's home, where they are offered black tea, baked bread, butter, and *rtsam pa*. The lama and monks chant until the corpse is completely cremated, a process that requires about an hour. Bone ash is gathered about a half hour after the lama and monks leave. The remains are stored in a container by the sons, brothers, or cousins of the deceased and taken to the *a mchod* of the concerned family

⁴³ Thick-shelled barley.

⁴⁴ This is procured from bushes in local mountains.

⁴⁵ This is considered sacred grass. Buddha obtained *ku sha* grass from a shepherd to use as a mat before he retreated to meditate under the Boddhi tree. Procuring *ku sha* grass requires a six hour roundtrip to local mountains.

who performs *rus chog*⁴⁶ 'bone ritual' for forty-nine consecutive days, or for at least a week. The *a mchod* is always a *dge slong* 'fully ordained monk', who abides by the 253 codes of conduct. He is offered 800-1,000 RMB in cash, a *kha btags*, a piece of white felt, and three tea bricks. Afterwards, he is offered a bag of flour and a bag of fruits every year. Every Lo sar, he is visited by the concerned family who brings him a piece of baked bread and two or three tea bricks. It is also a must that a lower part of a pig or sheep carcass is sent to the *a mchod* every winter.

Upon the completion of *rus chog*, a son or a brother of the deceased, if the family is wealthy, goes to Lha sa to scatter the bone ash at such important religious sites as Se ra, 'bras spung, and Dga' ldan monasteries. The ash may also be scattered near Yum bu bla sgang and Lha mo bla mtsho. Most village families, however, are not wealthy, so mix the remains with brown earth, and mold *tshwa tshwa*⁴⁷ from it that are then taken to the tops of such local mountains as A ma Sman btsun or such monasteries as Brag. It may also be scattered on several sacred mountaintops or in the Yellow River. At times, bone ash is scattered on the water surface and then a *tshwa tshwa* 'mold' is used to slap the water surface. Making a trip to take bone ash to Lha sa and offering butter lamps in the Potala Palace, Se ra, 'bras spung, and Dga' ldan monasteries are ideal choices for villagers.

When a village monk dies, all the monks from his *gshog ka* or group of monks from the same monastery gather and sell his belongings to fellow monks or the monastery the deceased monk belonged to so that they will

⁴⁶ A religious ritual that consecrates the bone ash or the remains of the deceased.

⁴⁷ It refers to the mould and also to the clay stupa-shaped, egg-sized objects that come from the mold.

be able to host *mang ja* and offer butter lamps in monasteries. They chant for seven days consecutively. On the forty-ninth day after the death, the monks gather again to chant for the rebirth of the deceased monk. They do not expect payment and are not paid.

Sky Funeral

Sky funerals were discontinued in about 1990 because the sky funeral site required a journey on foot at a fast pace that took three hours one way. When the corpse was to be chopped up and fed to birds, a stretcher was made and sons, brothers, and cousins used it to carry the corpse on their shoulders to reach the site before sunrise; a level, grassy area on a mountaintop. When the funeral procession returned, they were offered a meal identical to that following a water burial. A group of monks might also have been invited to chant near the burial site. They were paid a total of one hundred RMB, a piece of baked bread, a *kha btags*, and a tea brick.

Friends of the concerned family might have gone to guard the body and accepted the duties of the *gtegs ldan* 'body-cutter' who was always a villager who had no blood or marriage relationship to the deceased. He was paid fifty to one hundred RMB in cash, a piece of baked bread, and a tea brick. Occasionally, *phrug* and *tsha ru* were given to the *gtegs ldan*, who rarely disclosed his identity in fear that he might be asked to do another cutting job in the future and the belief that cutting up a body might defile his soul.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Bstan 'dzin dge legs (1999, 560-561) reports that in the Tibet Autonomous Region, one or two people set out first either on horse or on foot with packs containing *rtsam pa*, tea, butter, Tibetan cakes, and cooked meat. The body

CONCLUSION

Seating is a rich study in relationship to the deceased, age, generation, authority, and gender. For example, in terms of gender, men are seated inside the house with male elders seated on white felt on *he rdze* while most women kneel or squat on the bare ground outside.

Gifts presented to those who attend the funeral demonstrate the importance of religious authority, e.g., a lama was presented gifts worth 548-3,526 RMB in 2007, while a village family was rewarded with a tea brick (five RMB in value) for their contribution of several days of hard, manual labor.

Food also represents social status, e.g., the *sngas mgo* lama and monks are served meat and other, better food and a wealthy family may feed the entire village for five days. Regular families were required, in 2007, to spend at least 740 RMB to feed the lama and monks.

Every village household contributes to the funeral; to do otherwise risks being labeled a cruel, indecent human

cutters, known as *stobs ldan*, and carriers, known as *phung gdan*, receive appropriate cash payment, a few pieces of *kha btags*, and a few clothes of the deceased. The *stobs ldan* receives many gifts. A few monks may be invited for about half an hour of chanting and are paid. Gele et al. (2004, 361) write that in Nag chu, distant relatives bring *rtsam pa* and boil butter tea far from the sky burial site. Meat is not eaten during the funeral. The *gtegs ldan*, who are often poor, are allowed to take the clothes of the deceased, fed a meal, and are given butter and *rtsam pa*. Occasionally, they are given a yak or a sheep. Rich families invite monks to chant close by. Yu (2004, 33) suggests that in the Tibet Autonomous Region, a body cutter is paid 300-3,000 RMB and a noted master might make 30,000 RMB a month.

being. When the representative of a village family is absent from a funeral of a neighbor or fellow villager, the village family receives such blistering criticisms as "Death is the greatest suffering one can experience. Evil must have gripped their entire family. Let's see what happens when death befalls them."

Many villagers are appropriated for various work duties—young men shop and perform such hard labor as building stoves for cooking in the concerned family's courtyard, chop meat, transport bags of wheat to the nearest mill to be ground in order for the family to prepare an adequate amount of wheat-flour-based food, and so on. Women bake bread, cook dishes of food, and serve visitors. Old men advise adults on such religious matters as which monasteries and lamas they should turn to for religious services. Old women chant and circumambulate the village *'bum khang* and pray for the deceased.

Looking at the broader picture of local funerals, status and other social distinctions are immediately apparent. This is evident from cremation and water burials, aside from sky funerals, which ceased more than a decade ago. Cremation is usually reserved for the group of respectable and knowledgeable elders, and old monks, owing to their religious authority. On the contrary, water burial is the commonplace method employed on the occasion when an ordinary villager dies.

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APPENDIX ONE: NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Tibetan terms followed by * are oral rather than literary terms. English terms preceded by * indicate that the translation indicates a category in which the Tibetan term belongs so that, for example A mdo (see below) is a location; the word A mdo does not, itself, translate as 'location'.

Tibetan	Wiley	Pinyin	Chinese Characters	English
ཨ་མ་ཇོ་ཤ།	<i>a mchod</i>	<i>jingchan heshang</i>	经忏和尚	a fully ordained monk who performs the 'bone ritual' for the deceased
ཨ་མ་དོ།	A mdo	Anduo	安多	*location
ཨ་ལྷེ་མ་སྒྲིབ་ཤ།	A myes Srin po	Anishenbao	阿尼申宝	*location/ deity name
ཨ་མ་ཤེ་ཤེ་ཤེ་ཤ།	<i>aoM ma Ni</i>	<i>an ma ni ba mi</i>	唵嘛呢叭弥	a Buddhist mantra
	<i>pad + me h'uM</i>	<i>hong</i>	吽	
བར་དོ།	Bar do	<i>wa'erduo</i> (<i>zhongyin</i>)	瓦尔多 (中阴)	the intermediate state between death and reincarnation
བདེ་ཆེན།	Bde chen	Degün si	德钦寺	*monastery

བདུས་པ།	<i>bdun pa sa</i>	<i>qi senglü</i>	七僧侶	a group of seven monks that are invited from the largest and closest monasteries
བཀྲ་ཤིས་བརྟུན་པ།	Bkra shis brtsegs pa			*scripture
བླ་བྱང་།	Bla brang	Labuleng si	拉卜楞寺	*monastery
བླ་མཚོ་དྲ།	Bla mchod			*scripture
བླ།	Brag	Zhihe si	智合寺	*monastery
འབྲས་ཁྱོག་*	'bras nyog	<i>babao fan</i>	八宝饭	rice porridge
འབྲས་སྤུངས།	'bras spungs	Zhebang si	哲蚌寺	*monastery
བསང་ནི།	<i>bsang khri</i>	<i>jitan</i>	祭坛	place for burning smoke offerings
འབུམ་ཁང་།	'bum khang	<i>benkang</i>	奔康	a square structure that contains thousands of deity icons molded from clay.
བཟོམ་ཙ།	<i>bzom tsa</i>			a meal of butter and <i>rtsam pa</i>
པོ་ར།	<i>Da ru</i>	<i>bolangu</i>	拨浪鼓	a small two-faced drum with attached strikers
དབང་རྒྱལ།	Dbang rgyal	Xiangjie	项杰	*person

དགའ་ལྷན།	Dga' ldan	Gandan si	甘丹寺	*monastery
དགེ་འོ་*	<i>dge bo</i>			tantric specialist, former monk
དགེ་ལུགས།	Dge lugs	Gelu pai	格鲁派	sect of Tibetan Buddhism
དགེ་སློང་།	<i>dge slong</i>	<i>qishi</i>	乞士	fully ordained monk
དུམ་ཐག	<i>dmu thag</i>	<i>muta</i>	穆塔	'rope' by which being supposedly ascended from Earth to Heaven
དོ་ལྷ།	Do kyA	Duojia	多加	*location
དཔའ་ལུང་།	Dpa' lung	Hualong	化隆	*location
རྡོ་ལྷ།	<i>dril bu</i>	<i>jingang ling</i>	金刚铃	bell
དུས་རབས་*	<i>dus ran</i>			the first anniversary of the deceased's death.
ལམ་མོ་	Gcan tsha	Jianzha	尖扎	*location
ལམ་མོ་རྩེ་པང་།	Gcan tshai' thang	Jianzha tan	尖扎滩	*location
གདུང་སྡ།	Gdung sna	Kangyang	康杨	*location
གླིང་ཆེ།	Gle chen	Lejian	勒见	*location

གནམ་རྩེ་།	Gnam rdzong	Nanzong si	南宗寺	*monastery
གྲི་གུམ་བུ་པོ་།	Gri gum btsan po	Chigongzanbu	赤贡赞布	*person
གསང་སྟོན་།	Gsang sgrog	Sangzhu si	桑主寺	*monastery
གཤོག་ཀ་*	<i>gshog ka</i>			group of monks from the same monastery
གསོ་སྦྱང་།	<i>gso sbyong</i>	<i>changjing</i>	长净	chanting performed during fasting
གཉིས་པ་ལྔ་།	<i>gtegs ldan</i>	<i>tianzang shi</i>	天葬师	'body-cutter' who dismembers the corpse
གྱིང་སྟོང་།	Gyer steng	Jieshendang si	结什当寺	*monastery
གུ་ལུང་ས་འདུས་།	Gzungs 'dus	Tuoluoni ji	陀罗尼集	*scripture
རྟེ་རྟེ་*	<i>he rdze</i>	<i>kang</i>	炕	heated sleeping platform
ཁ་བཏགས་།	<i>kha btags</i>	<i>hada</i>	哈达	strip of ceremonial silk
ཁམས་ར་།	Khams ra	Kanbula	坎布拉	*location
ཁྲི།	<i>khri</i>	<i>baozuo</i>	宝座	throne
ཁྲི་ཀ།	Khri ka	Guide	贵德	*location
ཁྲི་ལོ།	Khri lho	Guinan	贵南	*location
ཀོ་ལུ་བ།	Ko'u ba	Guwa si	古哇寺	*monastery
ཀུ་ཤ།	<i>ku sha</i>	<i>husha cao</i>	弧沙草	a sacred grass collected on mountains

ཀུན་རྟེན་རྒྱལ་པོ་པ་	Kun rig mam par snang mdzad	Puninghongguang fo	普明宏光佛	*scripture
ལ་དྭགས།	La dwags	Ladake	拉达克	*location
ལྷ་བཤོས།	<i>lha bshos</i>	<i>shenxiu</i>	神馐	such sacrificial objects made of <i>rtsam pa</i> as butter lamps and pyramids.
ལྷ་མོ་བླ་མ་ལོ།	Lha mo bla mtsho	Lamucuo tianhu	拉姆措天湖	*location
ལྷ་རི།	Lha ri	Lari si	拉日寺	*monastery
ལྷ་ས།	Lha sa	Lasa	拉萨	*location
ལྷ་ཡུལ།	Lha yul	Tiantang	天堂	Heaven
ལོ་ཁོག།	Lo khog	Luoke	洛科	*location
ལའི།	<i>ma Ni</i>	<i>mani</i>	嘛呢	mantra
ལང་ཇ།	<i>mang ja</i>	<i>zhaiseng cha</i>	斋僧茶	<i>sha khu</i> given to monks when requesting them to chant for the deceased
ལང་ཁུ་ཐང་།	Mar khu thang	Maketang	马克塘	*location
ལཛོད་*	<i>mchod</i>	<i>huicai</i>	烩菜	offering
ལད་ད་བཞི།	Mda' bzhi	Hayan	海晏	*location

མཛད།	Mdo	Jijing lun	集经论	*scripture
མགུར།	Mgur	Gulu si	古鲁寺	*scripture
མགུར།	<i>mgur</i>	<i>sheng ge</i>	圣歌	songs of spiritual realization
མུ་ལུ།	<i>mu'u</i>	<i>mu</i>	亩	*measurement
ངང་རོང་།	Ngang rong	Erang si	俄让寺	*monastery
ནམོ།	Nya mo	Niangmo	娘莫	*location
འོད་དཔག་མེད་སྟོང་ མཛོད།	'od dpag med stong mchod	Wuliangguang fo	无量光佛	ceremony is performed so that Amitābha will show the way for the deceased
འཕྲོ་བཀའ་ནང་མཁན་ལྷ་མ།	<i>'pho ba gnaug</i> <i>mkhan bla ma</i>			the lama responsible for guiding the deceased's soul to a next life
འཕྲོ་ལུང་།	'pho lung	Powalong	颇瓦隆	*scripture
ཕུག་	<i>phrug</i>			woolen cloth
པོ་ཏ་ལ།	Po ta la	Budala gong	布达拉宫	Potala Palace
རིན་ཆེན།	Rin chen	Renqing	仁青	*person
རིང་ཇ།	<i>ring ja</i>			black tea

རུ་ཁུ།	Rma chu	Huanghe	黄河	Yellow River
རུ་ལྷོ།	Rma lho	Huangnan	黄南	*location
སོག་པོ།	Sog bo	Henan	河南	*location
རྩིང་མ།	Rnying ma	Ningma pai	宁玛派	a sect of Tibetan Buddhism
རྩ་གཤམ་ལོང་། (ལིག་སྒྲ་ རྩ་གཤམ་ལོང་།)	Rtsag 'a gong	Zhagong	子哈贡	*location
རྩ་མ་པ།	rtsam pa	zanba	糌粑	roasted barley flour and the dough made from such flour
རྩི་ལོག།	Rtse khog	Zeku	泽库	*location
རུས་ཆོག།	rus chog			'bone ritual'
རྩྭ་ཁྱོ།	tshwa tshwa	chacha	察察	clay reliquaries
སེ་པ།	Se ra	Sela si	色拉寺	*monastery
སྒར་ཁ།	Sgar kha	Gaka si	噶卡寺	*monastery

གཤམ།	<i>sha khu</i>				noodles cooked with a generous amount of meat
སྐར་མ།	<i>skar ma</i>			出殡	the day on which the corpse is disposed
སྐལ་བུ་མ།	Sku 'bum	Ta'er si		塔尔寺	*monastery
སྐྱུ་ཁྱེ།	Skya rgya	Jiajia		贾加	*location
སྐལ་བླ།	Sman bla	Yaoshi fo		药师佛	*scripture
སྐོན་ལམ།	Smon lam				*scripture
སོ་བ།	<i>so ba</i>	<i>daike qingke</i>		带壳青稞	thick-shelled barley
སྤང་སྐོར།	Stong skor	Huangyuan		湟源	*location
ཐབ་རྟོ།	<i>thab rdo</i>	<i>zaoshi</i>		灶石	hearthstone
ཐར་མདོ།	Thar mdo	Jietuo jing		解脱经	*scripture
ཐོར་ཐུག།	<i>thor thug</i>				noodles
ཙ་ཤ།	<i>Tsha ru</i>	<i>gaoqiu</i>		羔裘	lambskin, lambskin robe
མཚོ་སྒོ་ན།	Tsho sngon	Qinghai		青海	*location
ཏུན་ཧོང།	Tun hong	Dunhuang		敦煌	*location
ཡུལ་ཤུལ།	Yul shul	Yushu		玉树	*location
ཡུམ་བུ་བླ་སྐང་།	Yum bu bla sgang	Yongbulakang		雍布拉克康	*location

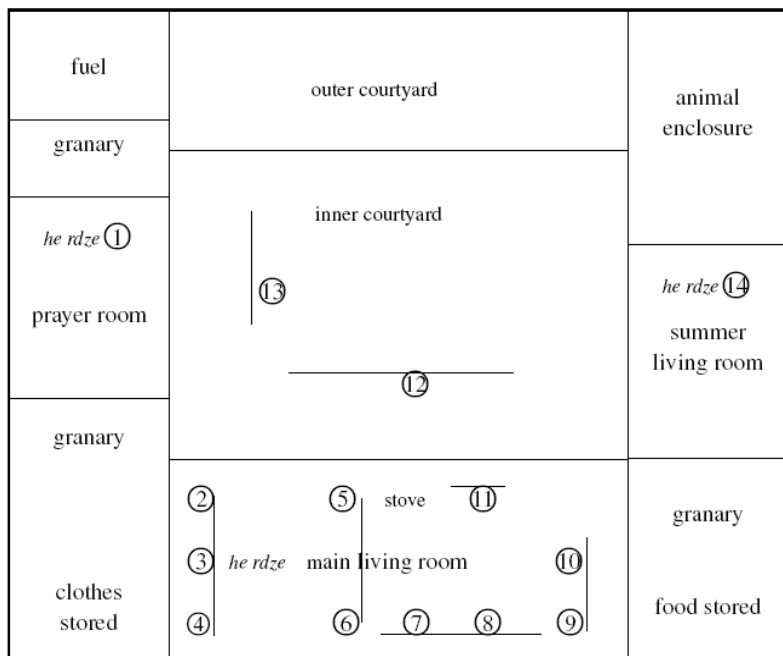
APPENDIX TWO: FUNERAL SCHEDULE

Day	Detail
Thirty days before the death if the family member is seriously ill	All family members are present.
The day before the death if the family member is seriously ill	Relatives visit the concerned family.
The day of death (Day 1)	<i>Bdun pa sa</i> are invited. Villagers visit the concerned family.
Day 2	Villagers outside visit the concerned family and fasting begins.
Day 3	<i>Sngas mgo</i> lama is invited for <i>skar ma</i> . The corpse is removed and disposed of.
Day 4	The entire village is fed three meals. All local monasteries are visited.
Day 5	The entire village is fed three meals. All local monasteries are visited.
Day 6	Fast begins at dawn.
Day 7	Fast continues.
Day 8	Fast ends at dawn.
Day 9	Visit Sku 'bum Monastery.
Day 10	Visit Bla brang Monastery.

APPENDIX THREE: FUNERAL SEATING AT A TYPICAL LO KHOG VILLAGE HOME.



North



- 1 lama
- 2 lama
- 3 monk
- 4 old men from the village and outside the village
- 5 old men from outside the village
- 6 old village men
- 7 adult men from outside the village
- 8 adult village men
- 9 adolescents from outside the village
- 10 village male adolescents
- 11 old village women
- 12 village women
- 13 village children
- 14 corpse

APPENDIX FOUR: FUNERAL EXPENDITURES

Recipient	Cash	Other Items	Value RMB
The deceased		Offered every meal: milk tea, <i>rtsam pa</i> , fried and baked bread, <i>sha khu</i> , <i>bras nyog</i> , <i>mechod</i> , yogurt, and fruits. At least 3 lit butter lamps are offered continuously.	40
<i>Sngas mgo</i> lama	300-1,500 RMB	A piece of white felt, 3 tea bricks, 3 pieces of baked bread, a <i>kha btags</i> , and a silk <i>bzo 'go</i> . This may be added to a quilt or blanket, a piece of white felt, a tea kettle, a scoop, 3 pieces of <i>thab rdo</i> , an aluminum pot containing half a kilogram of each of rice, wheat flour, barley flour, butter, and cheese. At times, both <i>phrug</i> and <i>tsha ru</i> are also presented.	548-3,526
Each <i>bdun pa sa</i>	50 RMB	A piece of baked bread, a tea brick, a <i>kha btags</i> .	434
Monks chanting 'od dpag med stong mchod	50 RMB	A piece of baked bread, a tea brick, a <i>kha btags</i> .	434

Monks chanting Sman bla'i stong mchod	50 RMB	A piece of baked bread, a tea brick, a <i>kha btags</i> .	434
Each visitor		Black tea, fried bread, butter, and <i>rtsam pa</i> . A bowl full of tea leaves wrapped in a white cloth.	385
Each monk in local monasteries	5-10 RMB	Served <i>sha khu</i> . A piece of baked bread, a tea brick.	8,000-10,500
Village children		Given candies.	50
Each funeral procession member		Served <i>sha khu</i> . Given a bowl full of tea leaves wrapped in white cloth and a fist-sized chunk of <i>rtsam pa</i> .	680
Clan women make dough and men fry it		Served 2.5 kg of butter and 10 kg of <i>rtsam pa</i> .	204
Clan women who bake bread		Served 2.5 kg of butter and 10 kg of <i>rtsam pa</i> .	204

Every villager		Offered tea and fried bread in the morning. At noon, the meal alternates between ' <i>bras nyog</i> and ' <i>mchod</i> . In the evening, they are served ' <i>sha khu</i> . This feeding of the village is always extended to 2-3 days.	2,400
Each absent villager		A ' <i>mar lo</i> , 2 pieces of fried or baked bread in the morning, a bowl of ' <i>bras nyog</i> or ' <i>mchod</i> at noon, and a bowl of ' <i>sha khu</i> in the evening during the period when all villagers are fed.	260
Each village family upon the completion of feeding the entire village		A piece of baked bread, and a tea brick. Wealthy families might give in addition, 7.5 kg of rice, 15 kg of wheat flour, 0.5 kg of butter, and 10-15 RMB in cash to each village family.	600-3,920

Fasting villagers	10 RMB (monks or <i>dge bo</i>), 5 RMB (regular fasting villagers)	Before they leave, they are each given a tea brick and a piece of baked bread. Served only black tea or <i>ring ja</i> in the morning. At noon, served butter and <i>rtsam pa</i> called <i>bzom tsa</i> (7.5-10 kg of butter and 25 kg of <i>rtsam pa</i>). Served black tea in the evening. No meal is offered on the second day. At dawn of the third day, served <i>thor thug</i> (5 kg of roasted wheat flour cooked in milk) and next, either <i>sha khu</i> or meat-stuffed dumplings.	900
A person from each village family on Dus ran		Served <i>sha khu</i> .	450
Three prayer flags			21
A mason for the <i>bsang khri</i> at the cremation site	50 RMB	Offered a piece of baked bread and a tea brick.	58
Funeral procession		Black tea, baked bread, butter, and <i>rtsam pa</i> . They are each given a tea brick when they leave.	350

A mchod	800-1,000 RMB	A <i>dge slong</i> or fully ordained monk is offered a <i>kha btags</i> , a piece of white felt, and three tea bricks. Afterwards, he is offered a bag of flour and a bag of fruits every year. Every Lo sar, he is visited by the concerned family who brings him a piece of baked bread, and 2-3 tea bricks. It is also a must that the bottom half of a pig or sheep is sent to the <i>a mchod</i> every winter.	1,270-1,570
Monks chanting at the sky funeral site	100 RMB	A piece of baked bread, a <i>kha btags</i> , and a tea brick.	112
Gtegs ldan	50-100 RMB	A piece of baked bread, a tea brick, and at times a <i>phrug</i> or a <i>tsha ru</i> of the deceased is given.	58-1,158

Other Expenditures (RMB)		
Feasting <i>sngas mgo</i> lama and <i>bdun pa sa</i>	3.5 kg of sugar (5 RMB/kg = 17.50 RMB), 6.5 kg of <i>rtsam pa</i> (1.6 RMB/kg = 10.40 RMB), 15 kg of butter (24 RMB/kg = 360 RMB), and a sheep carcass (500 RMB).	740
'od dpag med stong mchod	1,000 lit butter lamps (70 kg of butter), 1,000 bowls of water, 1,000 bowls of barley (75-80 kg of barley), and 1,000 <i>lha bshos</i> (150 kg of <i>rtsam pa</i>).	1,238
Sman bla'i stong mchod	1,000 lit butter lamps (70 kg of butter), 1,000 bowls of water, 1,000 bowls of barley (75-80 kg of barley), and 1,000 <i>lha bshos</i> (150 kg of <i>rtsam pa</i>).	1,238
Clan families are returned bowls, basins, buckets, spoons, black felt, and tables	Each is given a few slices of baked bread mixed with fried bread.	50
Communal pots from the village shrine are returned	At least a half tea brick in each of the communal pots.	10

Gso sbyong by tantric specialists or <i>dge bo</i>	6-7.5 kg of <i>tsam pa</i> and nearly 1 kg of butter are required for the ritual.	42
For the first 7 weeks	3 lit butter lamps are continuously offered.	42
	On the 49th day, the deceased is reborn. Fasting takes place again, which requires exactly the same expense. Several monks may be invited to chant and they are given the same amount of gifts as <i>bdun pa sa</i> . Local major monasteries are again visited and offered butter lamps. Some rich families visit the <i>sngas mgo</i> lama who ensures the ascent of one's soul and who is presented 100 RMB, a tea brick, a piece of baked bread, and a <i>kha btags</i> .	1,700
	A blanket or white cloth, a <i>phrug</i> or <i>tsha ru</i> . A piece of white felt may also be dumped in the river.	50-1,600
Offering ingredients for cremation	A basin and bowl of sesame seed (7 RMB/kg = 52.5 RMB), a basin and bowl of wheat (1.6 RMB/kg = 12 RMB), a basin and bowl of barley (1.6 RMB/kg = 12 RMB), a basin and bowl of white beans (2 RMB /kg = 15 RMB), a basin and bowl of white mustard seed (6 RMB/kg = 45 RMB), a	532

	basin and bowl of <i>so ba</i> (1.6/kg = 12 RMB), a basin and bowl of rice (3.2 RMB/kg = 24 RMB), 15 kg of butter (12 RMB/kg = 360 RMB).	
	Upon the completion of <i>rus chog</i> , a male member of the deceased's family starts a journey to Lha sa.	700
Total = 24,384-36,132 RMB		

Gifts to the Concerned Family		
Sons and daughters, and other relatives	Loads of barley or wheat grain on pack animals ranging from 150-500 kg in amount. Those with official jobs bring 100-1,000 RMB in cash. A sheep carcass or a sheep stomach full of butter may complement the cash offering.	4,400-12,200
Visitors each bring a piece of baked bread, a tea brick, or both as a token of their concern for the family		960
Total = 5,360-13,160 RMB		

APPENDIX FIVE: MONASTERIES VISITED BY THE CONCERNED FAMILY⁴⁹

Monastery Name (Sect)	Township/ Town
Bde chen (Dge lugs)	Nengke
Mgur (Dge lugs)	Ma ke tang
Brag (Rnying ma)	Ma ke tang
Gsang sgrog (Dge lugs)	Skya rgya
Ngang rong (Dge lugs)	Tsho drug
Ko'u ba (Dge lugs)	Tsho drug
Gyer steng (Dge lugs)	Steng so
Rdzong nang (Dge lugs)	Khams ra
Gnam rdzong (Rying ma)	Khams ra
Sgar kha (Dge lugs)	Gcan tshai' thang
Lha ri (Dge lugs)	Do kya

⁴⁹ Bde chen has forty-three sub-monasteries located in Gcan tsha, Khri lho, Khri ka, Dpa' lung, Hai an, Stong skor, 'ba' rdong, and Rtse khog counties. Mgur Monastery has the longest history.

THE SENG ZE VILLAGE *MA NI*

Dkon mchog dge legs (Independent Scholar) and Charles
Kevin Stuart (Independent Scholar)

ABSTRACT

Local residents believe Seng ze Ma Ni in Khams has the largest number of *ma Ni* stones in a single location anywhere in the world. Certain accounts, sacred objects, and ceremonies associated with the Ma Ni and an interview with a resident, provide insight into its historical importance as a focus of pilgrimage and trade. Local beliefs and statements reveal the significance of the Ma Ni with regard to local notions of territoriality.

KEY WORDS

Seng ze Ma Ni, Khams, *ma Ni* stones, Yul shul, Yushu, Qinghai

INTRODUCTION

Rgya nag Ma Ni is located in Seng ze Village, Skye dgu Township, Yul shul County, Yul shul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province, PR China. Local residents believe the Seng ze Ma Ni in Khams contains the largest concentration of *ma Ni* stones to be found in a single location anywhere in the world.¹ Certain accounts, sacred objects, and ceremonies associated with the Ma Ni, and an interview with a resident are presented, providing insight into its historical importance as a focus of pilgrimage and trade. Local beliefs and statements also reveal the significance of the Ma Ni with regard to local notions of territoriality.

¹ In 2004, Seng ze Village received a certificate from the *Shanghai Great World Guinness Book of Records* attesting to the Ma Ni being the largest *ma Ni* pile in the world, although such certification is questionable. As *Beijing Newspeak* reports: "The 'Shanghai Great World Guinness Book of Records' has been confusing the media and the public for years. As the Xinhua article explains, Guinness' official representative in China is Liaoning Education Press which has been 'the real Guinness Book of Records representative in China since Shanghai Great World Guinness and the Guinness Book of Records split in 1996.' When the two organisations parted, the Shanghai office changed the 'Guinness' part of its name from ji (1st tone) ni (2nd tone) si (1st tone) to ji (2nd tone) ni (2nd) si (1st)—i.e., a different first character with a slightly different pronunciation (*sic*)" (<http://www.beijingnewspeak.com/2007/10/30/guinness-confusion-continues-for-chinas-aspiring-record-breakers/> accessed 16 August 2008).

ACCOUNTS OF THE RGYA NAG² INCARNATE LAMA

Rgya nag 'China' derives from local accounts that say the incarnate lama who established the Ma Ni traveled in inner China before coming to and settling in Seng ze.

Locals believe that Rgya nag rtogs ldan byang chub 'phags dbang was born in Chab mdo approximately three centuries ago and eventually set out to find a place where he could, as an incarnate lama, develop Buddhism, and help sentient beings find enlightenment. His subsequent travels took him to numerous Tibetan areas and to India. Finally, he came to Seng ze and established the Ma Ni. The seventh incarnation of the lama died in 1994 and three years later, a local one-year-old boy was recognized as the successor. The following three accounts about the first incarnation are still heard today.

*Flying Across the Yangtze River*³

When the lama reached the banks of the Yangtze River (which originates in Yul shul, along with the Mekong and Yellow Rivers) he asked local boatmen to help him cross. They were busy harvesting barley and ignored him. Rtogs ldan grew tired of waiting, unfurled his shawl, and flew across the river. Two boatmen saw him in flight and concluded that he must be a great saint and invited him to cross the river in their boat whenever he chose. Rtogs ldan told the boatmen that they should assist impoverished people and not charge them to cross

² Rgya nag refers to 'China' and Han Chinese inhabited areas.

³ Told to Dkon mchog dge legs by his mother, Skal yag (b. 1947), in Seng ze Village in the 1980s.

the river if they could not pay. The boatmen agreed. This explains why Tibetan Yangtze River boatmen historically did not charge people who could not pay to cross the river.

*Bringing a Horse Back to Life*⁴

When Rtogs ldan was travelling in Sichuan, he noticed a young man sobbing because his beloved horse had died. Sympathizing with the young man, Rtogs ldan put his prayer wheel on the dead steed's head, and melodiously chanted *aoM ma Ni pad + me h'uM*. The horse revived. This prayer wheel is called 'Do ba ro rtseng 'khor lo (horse reviving prayer wheel) and was used in Thub bstan Monastery, Khri 'du County in Yul shul Prefecture in 2008.

*Tossing Tea*⁵

Rtogs ldan traveled to Emei Mountain in Sichuan, came to Lcags la rgyal bo's⁶ territory, and raised a scripture flag (Buddhist scriptures printed on cloth or banners) before the palace of the local king, Lcags la. Lcags la noticed the scripture flag and angrily demanded to know who had put it up. When he learned that the responsible party was a monk, he

⁴ Dkon mchog dge legs recounted this account based on Seng ze villagers' stories that he has heard. See A mye chos grags et al. (1990, 31-32) for a very similar account.

⁵ Told to Dkon mchog dge legs by Skal yag in Seng ze Village in the 1980s.

⁶ Lcags la rgyal bo was a local king in the vicinity of Dar rtse mdo.

ordered his subordinates to bring the monk to him. After Rtogs ldan was found, his hands were smaller than the handcuffs. When still smaller handcuffs were tried, they suddenly disintegrated. When the king was informed of this, he wished to test Rtogs ldan. He told him to throw, at the same time, sixteen tea bricks on top of the palace. Instead, Rtogs ldan threw them so far away that it required one day by horse to find them.

SACRED OBJECTS

In addition to accounts of Rtogs ldan's miracles that attest to his saintliness, there are also sacred relics kept in Seng ze Temple that are attributed to him. These included, in 2008, a rock with his handprint, a rock with his footprint, two stones upon which Rtogs ldan carved *ma Ni* with his finger, a stone that he squeezed, a talking *thang ka*, and a talking Buddha image.

We now describe several of these venerated relics.

*The Talking Thang ka*⁷

The *thang ka zhal grags* 'talking *thang ka*', is said to have come from 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa, the well-known Yuan Dynasty tutor, who presented it to Skal bzang Monastery in Khri 'du County and predicted that a man would come to fetch it in the future. When Rtogs ldan visited Skal bzang Monastery many years later he saw the *thang ka zhal*

⁷ Told to Dkon mchog dge legs by his father, Bsam yag (b. 1947), in Seng ze Village in the 1980s. For a color photograph of this *thang ka*, see Byang chub (1991, 58).

grags and asked for it. The monastery refused. As Rtogs ldan was leaving the monastery the *thang ka* suddenly said, "Don't leave me! You are my real master!" This greatly shocked the monks. The monastery then gave it to him and he brought it to Seng ze.

*Stones*⁸

When Seng ze Villagers and Rtogs ldan began to dig for white stones upon which to carve *ma Ni*, Rtogs ldan drunkenly danced and sang. Villagers said, "Rtogs ldan has become crazy."

Rtogs ldan said, "Today, I indulge in drunkenness and madness," picked up a white stone, squeezed it into various shapes, and finally twisted it into a spiral. Next, he set the imprints of his hand and his foot on separate stones. He also picked up three black rocks, and on the third wrote *aoM ma Ni pad+me h'uM* with his finger. His purpose was to convince people of his powers so that he could easily establish the Seng ze Ma Ni.

RITUAL AND FESTIVAL

A dance related to the Ma Ni that is performed only in Seng ze Village is described, as are two festivals.

⁸ Dkon mchog dge legs offers this account based on Seng ze villagers' stories that he has heard. See A mye chos grags et al. (1990, 86) for a very similar account.

Seng ze chos bro

Seng ze chos bro refers to a dance performed only by men. Its origin is attributed to Rtogs ldan and its connection to Seng ze Ma Ni is obvious. Dancers are divided into two groups. The two groups sing antiphonally while dancing. An example of a verse follows:

- ¹དཔོན་པོ་དབང་ཐང་ཆེ་བྱུང་།
²འོག་སྤྲེལ་གྲག་རག་ཆེ་བྱུང་།
³དཔལ་ལྷན་དོན་འགྲུབ་གླིང་ལ་མཐུ་དང་རྣམ་པ་ཆེ་བྱུང་།
⁴གནས་ཆེན་མ་ཁེ་རང་བྱོན་རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་སྤྲེལ་ཆེ་བྱུང་།
⁵རྒྱལ་རི་ལྷག་པ་གཡུ་གཙུག་སྐྱུར་མཐོག་ས་བྲག་རྩལ་ཆེ་བྱུང་།

- ¹The leader achieved great power,
²Common people acquired prosperity.
³Dpal ldan don 'grub gling (Skye dgu Monastery) gained
magical power and ability.
⁴This sacred place of self-originated *ma Ni* stones bestows
blessings and accomplishment.
⁵Rgyab ri shug pa g.yu gtsug (a local mountain god) gained
overwhelming power.

The songs are characterized by solemn, long-drawn-out syllables and the dance movements match this in being slow and graceful.

Festivals

On the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the twelfth and first lunar months, several thousand Tibetans from Yul shul, Ser shul, Rma stod, and Chab mdo arrive in Seng ze Village, circumambulate the Ma Ni, and purchase *ma Ni* stones that they then add to the ever-growing pile. The actual festival begins on the tenth and the number of visitors increases in

the following five days. The fourteenth and fifteenth days are the peak of the festival. On the fifteenth day, the monks of Skye dgu Monastery conduct a public empowerment ritual; however, the role of this *ma Ni* festival has changed since a new religious gathering was initiated in December 1999.

In Seng ze Village on the tenth to fifteenth days of the eleventh lunar month of 1999, Skye dgu Monastery held a grand religious activity—Sa skya'i smon lam chen mo 'Sa skya Sect Great Prayer Meeting'. This was the first time it had been held and it has since continued annually. Skye dgu Monastery is both organizer and host while Seng ze Village assists by providing such public facilities as temples, water, and electricity. The number of people attending the ritual has steadily increased since the festival's inception.

In 2004, approximately fifty lamas and 5,000 monks from monasteries in Yul shul, Dkar mdzes Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, and the Tibet Autonomous Region participated in this gathering. Most monks represented their own monasteries and came to Seng ze with their own group of monks. Certain individual monk pilgrims happened to be in the area at the time and also participated. Each monk participant received thirty RMB a day on average as well as three hearty meals daily during the gathering.

In 1999, approximately 1,000 nuns attended, but they were excluded from participating in the formal chanting, because Skye dgu Monastery had not made arrangements for nuns, which meant that they also received no payment. In subsequent years, nuns did participate. From 50,000-100,000 people from throughout Yul shul Prefecture and such adjacent areas as Chab mdo and the northwest part of Dkar mdzes Prefecture also attended and participated in the chanting and circumambulation of the Ma Ni.

After Skye dgu Monastery began holding the great prayer meeting annually in the eleventh lunar month, the

number of visitors to the original Seng ze Ma Ni festival has dramatically decreased on the tenth to fifteenth days of the twelfth and first lunar months because many people only come once a year to attend the Ma Ni Meeting, and to shop.

Bzang spyod⁹ and mtshan brjod¹⁰ are chanted repeatedly throughout five days. A participating monk said that in 2006, Skye dgu Monastery provided three meals a day to all monk and nun participants that included *rtsam pa* and bread for breakfast; rice cooked with butter, jujubes, and raisins for lunch; and bread for a late afternoon meal, as well as a cash payment to each monk and nun. He reported that he received 170 RMB in five days. Nuns attended in a separate temple and also received payment and meals. The total participating monks and nuns numbered from 5,000 to 7,000 and represented Sa skya, Dge lugs, Bka' rgyud, and Rnying ma sects of Tibetan Buddhism.

The organizer also gives a gift to each participating monk and nun. Gifts vary from year to year. For example, bags, watches, and T-shirts inscribed with the name of the prayer meeting, Buddhist scripture books, and Buddha statues may be given.

Responding to the needs of the increasing number of participants, Skye dgu Monastery built a large open-roof hall in 2006 that can accommodate approximately 10,000 participants. The prayer meeting is not only for religious purposes; it also brings sizable profits to the organizer. A local monk stated that Skye dgu Monastery earned 200,000 to 300,000 RMB in 2006 through the prayer meeting, after deducting the costs of meals, payment, and other expenses.

⁹ Bzang spyod is a prayer scripture promoting a universal wish to bring happiness to all beings.

¹⁰ Mtshan brjod is a recitation of names of the Buddha, Boddhisattvas, and deities.

CONCULSION

To begin the final portion of this paper, we present a portion of an edited interview with a Seng ze resident born in the 1940s:

During my early childhood in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the *ma Ni* festival in Seng ze attracted several thousand Tibetans. They circumambulated the Ma Ni and purchased *ma Ni* stones which they then put on the Ma Ni.

Every village home had several small rooms for guests. Each room had a window and a door. No money was charged for accommodation. Families hoped that guests would purchase *ma Ni* stones from them and also introduce more customers to them.

The village's ability to accommodate guests was limited. Many people camped in nearby fields and near a river by the village. Yaks and horses brought by the visitors surrounded what was a large temporary camp. The yaks were used for transporting, for example, purchased *ma Ni* stones. Many nomads had no money so they exchanged animals or animal products for *ma Ni* stones.

People seized this public occasion to wear and exhibit splendid personal clothing. It was one of the few annual occasions for a huge crowd to gather in this vast, sparsely populated area.

As devotees chanted melodiously along the circumambulation route, nearby, along the road that ran by the village, a bustling market emanated a merry clamor of endless bargaining. Products offered included leather boots, clothing, incense, fruit from India and Lhasa, tea and rice from Sichuan, and dried noodles and jujubes from Zi ling

(Xining). Local products included wood kegs, knives, saddles, and salt.

This was an important trade opportunity for farmers and nomads. Both had plans for their families' annual food requirements, and consequently there was an abundant exchange of barley, butter, meat, and livestock.

A huge crowd gathered in our village. We were very excited whereas the nomad children were timid and cautious. We joyously crossed in and out of the crowd, market, and nomad camps as dogs ran about. Our parents encouraged us to take care of 'our little herdsmen friends'. We were very proud to take the nomad boys into the crowd and explain and show them what was what.

Some village boys played pranks on nomad girls. They put small stones on prayer wheels. When the girls rotated the wheels in the course of their circumambulations the small stones flew off and hit their heads.

Although farmers verbally deprecated herdsmen as '*brog rgog* 'country bumpkins', there was a relationship between the two based on trust, mutual gift-giving, and annual visits. Both farmers and herdsmen were proud to have friends in communities not their own.

The dimensions of this relationship were largely determined by economic relationships that allowed herdsmen to obtain barley and farmers to obtain butter and meat. A normal farmer's family needed to have a herdsman friend. If a farming family did not have a herdsmen friend, villagers thought he was incapable—it seemed as though this family had no men.

In late fall and early winter, villagers took barley to exchange for butter and livestock in

herding areas. Herdsmen gave sheep and yaks in return.

Villagers also tried to find more *ma Ni* customers. If they were successful, they made an oral contract. Payment for *ma Ni* was mostly in yaks.

The more nomad friends one had, the more benefits one received and villagers tried their best to contact as many nomads as possible. This was frequently difficult. Young men who went to herding areas the first time braved strong wind and snow and discovered the extent of their immature social skills. It was an unforgettable experience. This was an important part of the process of boys becoming men.

When villagers returned home with yaks, butter, and sheep, the animals were slaughtered for winter food. My family consumed at least ten yaks and fifteen sheep per winter. The total number of slaughtered animals was astounding. One particular village household slaughtered sixty to seventy yaks every winter and most of these animals were obtained through the *ma Ni* trade. This slaughtering was controversial because herdsmen paid living animals for *ma Ni* and then the *ma Ni*-makers killed the animals.

Why did the herdsmen barter yaks for *ma Ni* stones? They might have wanted to add *ma Ni* stones to the ever-growing *ma Ni* as a post-death ritual in order to better a dead relative's spiritual welfare.

Despite lamas' protests, the livestock-for-*ma Ni* business continued. The farmers said, "Herdsmen are stupid. Why would they trade livestock for *ma Ni* stones?"

The herdsmen always answered, "It is a question of purity of heart."

Ma Ni carving was not confined to trade, for carving *ma Ni* on boulders was a common post-death activity. When my paternal grandfather died in the 1950s, my father and his brothers carved innumerable *ma Ni* on cliffs near our village. All summer they camped in a deep gorge, rose when the sun did, and worked until the sun set. Their clothes were worn out from scrambling on the cliffs and their hands were calloused from months of stone carving. They carved both large and small *ma Ni*.

In time, the memory of Grandfather faded and the lives of Father and his brothers returned to normal but the *ma Ni* deep in the stones of the cliffs are everlasting, though the passage of time may cover them with lichens. And I can still hear the gorge echoing with the sound of stones being carved as images of my father and uncles flash before my eyes.

This account suggests an idea shared both by residents of Seng ze Village and other Tibetans—the presence of the *Ma Ni* confers upon Seng ze Village a religious importance not found in any other location in Mtsho sngon. The very large number of *ma Ni* stones concentrated in Seng ze Village and the sacred objects associated with the founder of the *Ma Ni* combine to create an attractive pilgrimage site. Purchasing *ma Ni* stones in the village, adding them to the *Ma Ni*, and circumambulating the *Ma Ni* are considered helpful for one's karma. Furthermore, the unique dance and songs performed by Seng ze villagers during the lunar New Year period are also related to the *Ma Ni* and provide unique entertainment, which further attracts visitors.

Seng ze dance is renowned. Seng ze villagers historically kept the words of the accompanying song absolutely secret because they did not want outsiders to

learn them. To this end, when two teams danced and sang, each team would begin singing before the other team finished, thus it was virtually impossible for spectators to understand the words.

The *ma Ni* trade—*ma Ni* stones for livestock and butter—was an important moment for trade and interaction between farmers and nomads at Seng ze. While sharing devotion to the idea of the importance of the Ma Ni, both parties obtained needed food items. While each side benefited from this, at the same time, stereotypes related to the farmer-herdsman dichotomy were reinforced.

Seng ze villagers are very proud of the Ma Ni. They derive a unique sense of territorial identity from the village having been chosen by Rgya nag rtogs ldan. They believe that the Ma Ni is of such religious significance that it is unnecessary to visit other religious pilgrimage sites. This reverence for the Ma Ni is evident each morning as most middle-aged and older village residents circumambulate before beginning the day's activities. During the New Year period of village performances related to the Ma Ni, many buses shuttle between Seng ze Village and Skye dgu with pilgrims.

As the home of Chief Grwa bu, the most powerful leader in Yul shul in the 1940s and 1950s, Seng ze Village was also an important political site. This combination of political significance with the historical economic activity associated with trading opportunities created by the large number of pilgrims to the Ma Ni further added importance to Seng ze.

With the rapid growth of Skye dgu as the political and economic center of Yul shul Prefecture, only the religious importance of Seng ze Village remains, and remain it does, as the thousands of pilgrims who visit during the Tibetan New Year period testifies.

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¹¹ See Note at the end for more information on this publication.

NOTE

According to this printed version, the three main parts of this work were written at different times. Part I was written in a Wood Sheep year (Gregorian equivalent unknown), Part II was written in the Wood Horse year of the sixteenth sixty year cycle of the Tibetan Calendar (1954), and Part III was written in 1990. However, oral interviews with knowledgeable Seng ze villagers suggest that the original copy of Rtogs ldan's biography (Part I) was lent to a lama from 'bri stod County, Yul shul, at some unknown date and was never returned. Lama Ri ho from Skye dgu Monastery wrote the Rtogs ldan biography cited above, which the Seng ze Village Committee had carved on woodblocks. Dates for Lama Ri ho's birth and death and the age of the aforementioned wood blocks are unknown.

Part I is, as the title states, a biography of Rgya nag rtogs ldan byang chub 'phags dbang.

Part II describes the size of the Ma Ni, the various sorts and quantity of objects comprising the Ma Ni, the Ma Ni's benefits and functions, and rules for what may be carved on the *ma Ni* stones and what colors may be used on them.

Part III summarizes rebuilding the Ma Ni in the period 1986-1990, the Seng ze Village Committee's achievements related to religious revival in the village, and religious activities.

The appendix describes the importance of the publication of the work and lists numerous people who encouraged and supported Dbra rog bkra bzang and Bzang mkhan mkhan grub in their efforts to publish portions of this work in New Delhi in the Wood Ox year of the sixteenth sixty year cycle of the Tibetan Calendar (1985), based on the handwritten copy.

In 1990, Seng ze Village published the volume cited above at the Yul shul Prefecture Press, Skye dgu Town based on a machine-printed copy from India, with the exception of newly-added Part III. The volume cited above lists Seng ze Village Committee as the press, but this is incorrect for Seng ze Village had no press in 1990.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Wiley	Tibetan	<i>Pinyin</i>	Chinese
Ma Ni	མ་ཎི།	Mani shi	玛尼石
Seng ze	སེང་ཟེ།	Xinzhai cun	新寨村
Khams	ཁམས།	Kang	康
Dkar mdzes	དཀར་མཛེས།	Ganzi	甘孜
Skye dgu	སྐྱེ་དགུ།	Jiegu	结古
Yul shul	ཡུལ་ཤུལ།	Yushu	玉树
Chab mdo	ཆབ་མདོ།	Changdu	昌都
Mtsho sngon	མཚོ་སྔོན།	Qinghai	青海
'bri chu	འབྲི་ཆུ།	Changjiang	长江
Rdza chu	རྩ་ཆུ།	Lancangjiang	澜沧江
Rma chu	རྩ་ཆུ།	Huanghe	黄河
Rgyal bo	རྒྱལ་བོ།	Tusi	土司
Glang chen	གླང་ཆེན་འབྲིང་རི།	Emei shan	峨眉山
'gying ri			
'bri stod	འབྲི་སྟོད།	Zhiduo	治多
Dar rtse mdo	དར་རྩེ་མདོ།	Kangding	康定
Yon rgyal rabs	ཡོན་རྒྱལ་རབས།	Yuan chao	元朝
Khri 'du	ཁྲི་འདུ།	Chengduo	称多
Rgya nag	རྒྱ་ནག།	Zhongguo	中国
Sprul sku	སྤྱུལ་སྐྱུ།	Huofu	活佛
Zi ling	ཟླ་ལིང་།	Xining	西宁
Yul shul khul	ཡུལ་ཤུལ་ཁུལ་པར་	Yushu zhou	玉树州
par skrun khang	ཤུལ་ཁང་།	yinshua chang	印刷厂

TIBETAN LIFE AND TIBETOLOGICAL DISCOURSE:
DIFFERENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Heider's method of auto-ethnography is used to examine differences between everyday life as perceived by Tibetans and the Western Tibetological discourse that seeks to represent it. The significance of these differences is further discussed by examining the failure of critical discourse to impact Tibetology and narrow the gap between discourse and reality. Recommendations are made for improving Tibetology.

KEY WORDS

Tibet, Tibetology, Orientalism, Auto-ethnography

INTRODUCTION

Tibetology should strive to study *all* aspects of Tibet¹ in the same sense that climatology is the study of *all* aspects of climate, anthropology is the broad-based study of *all* humans, and ornithology is the study of *all* birds. In this context we examine differences between Tibet as evidenced by self-reportage of daily life by Tibetans and what Tibetologists² write about Tibet in the English language literature.³

Though not the first critique of Tibetology's content (see the *The Failure of Critical Discourse*, below) and methods (e.g., Child 2005 and Hansen 2003), this paper is unique in the method used to support our claims, and the extent to which they may be independently verified.

A comparison of Tibetological discourse with life as perceived by Tibetans is first made and then we outline the attempt of Tibetology to more closely align Tibetological discourse with Tibetan life, and the failure of that attempt. We conclude by making recommendations for the reform of Tibetology.

¹ The people, culture, and the location.

² A Tibetologist is defined as anyone who has published an article about Tibet here in international, peer-reviewed English language literature.

³ What Tibetologists report about Tibet, Tibetans, and Tibetan culture in published literature is hereafter referred to as 'the Tibetological discourse'.

PART ONE: COMPARING TIBETAN LIFE AND TIBETOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

To learn more about Tibetans' perceptions of their everyday life, a method of auto-ethnography⁴ demonstrated by Heider (1975), who asked sixty Grand Valley Dani school children 'What do people do?' is briefly examined. Heider obtained fifty answers from each child and presented this material by focusing on patterns of saliency (which responses were most common) and intergroup response differences, i.e., how males and females responded differently. For the purpose of linguistic analysis, he also presented the data alphabetically according to the main verb in each response.

Using this method, we focused on patterns of saliency rather than intergroup differences or linguistic analysis, by asking a sample of Tibetans to self-report on what people in their home area usually do. The question, 'What do people in your home usually do?'⁵ was given on paper, in Tibetan.⁶ Each respondent was asked to provide five answers, in order to describe general community life rather than the lives of specific individuals.

Eighty-seven respondents were surveyed, of whom forty-four were male and forty-three were female. At the time of the survey, all respondents were students in the

⁴ Heider's concept of auto-ethnography differs from the more common contemporary usage of the term 'autoethnography', meaning anthropologically informed and culturally aware autobiography (Berger and Ellis 2002).

⁵ ཁྱེད་ཀྱི་ཡུལ་དུ་མི་ཚོས་རྒྱུན་དུ་བྱ་བ་ཅི་ཞིག་བྱེད་དམ། The Tibetan *yul* means home in the general sense of home area/ territory/ town.

⁶ A copy of the survey form, along with a complete set of the data analyzed, may be obtained from the first author at gjroche@gmail.com.

English Training Program at Qinghai Normal University.⁷ In terms of livelihood, thirty-three percent reported that their family are nomads, thirty-two indicated they were farmers, and twenty-seven percent wrote that they were agro-pastoralists. The remaining eight percent lived in towns and cities doing wage labor; government work was the most common form of employment. All respondents were from Tibetan areas in China. The largest percentage of respondents (forty-two percent) was from Qinghai Province, followed by Sichuan Province (thirty-two percent), and Gansu Province (twenty-one percent). Five respondents were from Yunnan Province and one respondent was from the Tibet Autonomous Region. The average age of respondents was 18.6 years at the time of the survey (December 2007).

Ninety-three percent of respondents answered in Tibetan, three respondents wrote in English, and three answered in Chinese. Although respondents were asked to provide five responses each, only seventy-eight percent did so. We received a total of 409 responses. Fifteen responses were excluded from the analysis for one of the following reasons:

1. 'Double barrel' responses that included more than one activity, e.g., 'When Mother finishes farming she does housework'.
2. Incomprehensible or incomplete responses.

This gave a total of 394 responses that were analyzed by categorizing individual answers to reflect salient patterns of similarity: herding, farming, labor,⁸ business, education,

⁷ For a brief description of this program and the uniqueness of its students, see Bangsbo (2008).

⁸ Labor includes such unskilled labor as construction work.

housework, collecting items for income,⁹ leisure, religious activities, miscellaneous,¹⁰ office work, skilled labor, statements,¹¹ collecting fuel, handicrafts, and usual work.¹² These categories were ranked to obtain a numerically generated, hierarchically organized picture of what Tibetans usually do (see below).

To analyze the content of Tibetological discourse, a method mirroring, to some extent, auto-ethnography was utilized to analyze 558 English-language article titles published in the *Proceedings of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* between 1977 and 2000 (excluding the unpublished Eighth Seminar). Each title suggests a single subject, which made categorization easier. Titles were obtained from the database of the Tibetan and Himalayan Digital Library (www.thdl.org, accessed 20 December 2007).

Individual article titles were sorted into categories based on their topic and placed into the following categories: religion; history; language; miscellaneous; art (visual); literature; exile; livelihood; music; manuscripts, archives and collections; architecture, regional/ group description; health/ medicine; cartography; nationalism; dance; development/ modernity; computing; marriage; and

⁹ This includes collecting caterpillar fungi (*Cordiceps sinensis*) a medicinal herb collected in grassland areas during spring and summer. One fungus fetched five to forty RMB in 2007.

¹⁰ When it was impossible to make a category with three or more responses, responses were grouped together in a miscellaneous category.

¹¹ Several respondents used the survey as a forum to make general statements about local conditions, for example 'The local economy is underdeveloped'.

¹² We cannot explain the exact meaning of this response.

law.¹³ Titles were placed in a miscellaneous category when it was impossible to establish a category of three or more entries.¹⁴ Categories reflecting salient patterns in the data were chosen, rather than preemptively designing categories and forcing data into them.

Figure One summarizes the findings of the auto-ethnographic component of this study. Responses strongly reflect subsistence activities. Herding and farming are almost a third of all responses, followed by labor and business. The first non-subsistence, non-economic category to appear is education.

Figure One: Auto-ethnography responses ranked by number.

Category	Number	Percent ¹⁵
Herding	68	17
Farming	54	14
Labor	48	12
Business	36	9
Education	34	9
Housework	30	8
Collecting Items for Income	27	7
Leisure	18	5
Religious Activities	17	4
Miscellaneous	14	3
Office Work	11	3
Skilled Labor	9	2
Statements	8	2
Collecting Fuel	7	2

¹³ Categorization was subjective in the sense that art (visual), dance, and music could be combined and placed in 'expressive arts'.

¹⁴ This category contains titles ranging from 'psychic sports' to hippology.

¹⁵ Percentages are rounded, and may not total exactly one hundred percent.

Handicrafts	7	2
Usual Work	6	1
Total	394	

Figure Two summarizes Tibetological discourse, suggesting keen interest in Tibetan religion and little interest in such vernacular aspects of culture as livelihood, marriage, and architecture. Such 'high culture' topics as religion, history, visual art, and literature constitute seventy percent of the articles.

Figure Two: Analysis of Tibetological discourse, ranked by number.

Category	Number	Percent ¹⁶
Religion	244	44.0
History	90	16.0
Language	44	8.0
Miscellaneous	36	6.0
Art (visual)	35	6.0
Literature	21	4.0
Exile	15	3.0
Livelihood	13	2.0
Music	11	2.0
Manuscripts, Archives, and Collections	10	2.0
Architecture	7	1.0
Regional/ Group Description	5	1.0
Health/ Medicine	4	1.0
Cartography	4	1.0
Nationalism	4	1.0
Dance	3	0.5
Development/ Modernity	3	0.5
Computing	3	0.5
Marriage	3	0.5

¹⁶ Percentages are rounded, and may not total exactly one hundred percent.

Law	3	0.5
Total	558	

One difference between the results of our analysis of Tibetan auto-ethnography and our analysis of Tibetological articles is the 'top-heavy' nature of Tibetological discourse. Almost half the articles we analyzed were about Tibetan religion. In comparison, the Tibetan auto-ethnography showed a much more even spread of results, i.e., to have a percentage equal to the highest-ranked category in Tibetological discourse, the first three highest-ranked categories from the auto-ethnography must be combined.

In terms of differential ranking, religion is ranked first in Tibetological discourse (accounting for forty-four percent), but is ranked only ninth in the auto-ethnography (four percent). Articles written by Tibetologists tend to focus on text-based manifestations of religion, whereas none of the responses in the auto-ethnography mentioned 'Read religious texts' or anything similar. Instead, self-reported religious activities focused on such activities as circumambulation and household rituals. In addition, subsistence and economic activities account for over half of the auto-ethnography responses, while Tibetological discourse ranks livelihoods very low, with only two percent of published articles dedicated to this subject.

Tibetological discourse ignores Tibetan vernacular culture in favor of focusing on 'high culture'. Other social sciences such as anthropology, history, sociology, and culture studies, abandoned this approach long ago. This skewing is partly due to the relative ease with which texts may be accessed as opposed to the living cultures of Tibetan people, particularly in China.

This study has six methodological flaws: the question that was asked in the auto-ethnography component of the study, the categories into which the auto-ethnographic responses and Tibetological article titles were sorted, the

false dichotomy between Tibetan life and Tibetological discourse, respondent age, respondent region, and the definition of 'Tibetologist' used.

Differences such as those outlined above arose, given the question that was asked in the auto-ethnography. 'What do people usually do?' suggests answers focusing on work that may create a distorted distinction between Tibetan daily life and Tibetological discourse. Equally valid questions include: 'What is important for Tibetan people?' 'What would you like the world to know about Tibetans?' or 'What makes Tibetan culture special?' We encourage others to perform such investigations, to provide greater insight into Tibetan perspectives on Tibetan life.

The categorization of auto-ethnographic responses and Tibetological article titles is problematic. Other researchers, with different orientations and backgrounds, might classify the material differently. Without establishing *a priori* categories and forcing the data into them, such subjectivity is inevitable. Though every effort was made to establish categories reflecting patterns in the actual data, other scholars may wish to take this data set and perform alternative analyses.

A third problem is caused by establishing a false dichotomy between Tibet and Tibetological discourse. A small number of the articles analyzed as part of Tibetological discourse were written by Tibetans. The dichotomy between Tibetan life and Tibetological discourse is, therefore, at least to some extent, false. In fact, Tibetological discourse is, in part, produced and consumed as part of Tibetan life. We hope that others will examine the significance and meaning of this link more closely.

A fourth problem concerns the age of respondents, whose average was 18.6 years. No attempt was made to survey Tibetans of a variety of ages, which might have produced different results.

Another problem relates to the home region of the respondents, who were all Tibetans from China; hence perspectives from the international Tibetan community were excluded. Few respondents were from Yunnan and the Tibet Autonomous Region and this geographical skewing may have affected the responses.

A final problem concerns the definition of Tibetologist used here. We define a Tibetologist as anyone who has published an article about Tibet in international, peer-reviewed English language literature. This definition by necessity results in a narrow definition of Tibetology, given that it excludes non-English language publications that account for as much as half of all published literature on Tibet. There is also a gap between this definition, the definition of Tibetology it results in, and the materials analyzed here. Many Tibetologists opt, for a variety of reasons, to find venues for publication other than within the *Proceedings of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*. Excluding their work and focusing only on the *Proceedings* has skewed our results. However, while recognizing that the materials published in the *Proceedings* represents a particular nexus of funding, access to resources, methodological fashions, academic politics, social networks, personal preferences, and other contiguous factors, we maintain that the contents of the *Proceedings* are, to a large extent, representative of mainstream Tibetological discourse and its preoccupations.

Though these flaws limit, they do not invalidate the findings, for Tibetan life as perceived by Tibetans and Tibetological discourse do vary greatly. We now examine the recently arisen critical reflexivity in Tibetology and its inability to close the gap between discourse and lived experience.

PART TWO: CRITICAL DISCOURSE AND ITS FAILURE

In recent years, a discourse has emerged which, for the purpose of this paper, we will call critical Tibetology or critical Tibetological discourse. Inspired by Said's (1978) work on Orientalism, it has critiqued and deconstructed Tibetological discourse, e.g., Adams (1995), Bishop (2001), Brauen (2004), Dodin and Rather (2001), Lopez (1999), Schell (2001), Anand (2008), and Klieger (2002); these are all attempts to deconstruct Western biases, errors, fantasies, and misconceptions about Tibet. In general, they all locate Tibetological discourse as an Orientalist fantasy depicting Tibetan culture as the inverse of Western culture. These works all critique popular discourse on Tibet and not the academic Tibetological discourse, which is the focus of this paper. However, Said (1978) and Foucault (1970) have shown in general, and Stuart (1998) has shown in particular, that academic and popular discourses differ not so much in their content, but in the manner this content is produced. Consequently, we may take these authors' criticisms of popular discourse as applying to Tibetological discourse as defined above.

Given that Tibetology is, in the end, a niche field with a globally small population, it is easy to imagine that the publication of such rigorous, critical works would impact Tibetological discourse. It has, on the rhetorical level at least, garnered some response (e.g., Dreyfus 2005). A final analysis is done to examine the impact of this discourse on productive rather than rhetorical grounds.

Between 27 August and 2 September 2006, the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies was held. We categorized and ranked the papers presented at this conference, employing the same method described above. This conference was held eighteen years after the publication of *Orientalism*, more than a

decade after the first critical Tibetological text was published, and at a time when hundreds of Tibetan areas of China were easily accessible to researchers, both noncitizens and citizens of the PRC. Therefore, a narrowing of the gap between Tibetan life and Tibetological discourse should be evident. Figure Three (below) summarizes our findings.

Figure Three: Analysis of presentation titles from the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies.

Category	Number	Percent ¹⁷
Religion	72	22.5
Literature and Textual Studies	45	14.0
Miscellaneous	35	11.0
Visual Arts (including film)	30	9.0
Health/ Medicine	29	9.0
History	25	8.0
Development/ Modernity	18	6.0
Language	15	5.0
Computing/ IT/ Digitization	8	2.5
Exile	8	2.5
Architecture	7	2.0
Material Culture	6	2.0
Demographics	5	1.5
Music	4	1.0
Environment	4	1.0
Gender	3	1.0
Livelihood	3	1.0
Nationalism	3	1.0
Total	320	

¹⁷ Percentages are rounded, and may not total exactly one hundred percent.

This analysis shows certain changes in Tibetological discourse; the table's top-heaviness has been somewhat reduced. Although religion is the largest category, it constitutes only 22.5 percent of the discourse, or about half of what it previously did.

The question is, then: 'To what extent has the critical Tibetological discourse been successful in reforming Tibetological discourse?' To answer this question, we note that although religion has diminished in proportion, it remains the highest-ranked category. Moreover it is a third larger than the next largest category and if we remove the miscellaneous category from the ranking, then all of the top five categories fall under the rubric of 'high culture'—religion, literature, visual arts, health/ medicine, and history. Together these top five represent 62.5 percent of the total. As noted earlier, this clinging to a mode of inquiry is long out-dated in most other fields of inquiry. If critical Tibetological discourse is having an effect on general Tibetological discourse, it is doing so slowly.¹⁸

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A significant difference between Tibetan life as perceived by Tibetans and Tibetological discourse was initially noted. The former is mostly concerned with subsistence activities while Tibetological discourse is mostly focused on Tibetan 'high culture', particularly text-based manifestations of religion. The failure of critical discourse to bring Tibetology and Tibetan life closer together than before does not suggest that all Tibetologists should abandon their current work and

¹⁸ It is also possible that critical discourse is having no impact. The changes noted above may have been brought about by such other factors as changes in funding regimes or broader theoretical trends in academia.

begin investigating herding and farming. Instead, more attention must be given to studies of such vernacular music as work songs, lullabies, love songs, and non-monastic instrumental music; studies of orations, jokes, 'dirty' stories, urban myths, oral poetics, gossip, and rumors; children's rhymes, games, and tongue twisters; sports, dance, and body techniques; romance, sexuality, gender, weddings, childbirth, childrearing, domestic violence, and divorce; illness, home cures, healers, healing, healthcare choices, death, and funerals; clothing, fashion, hair styles, jewelry, tattooing, and body image; the skills and knowledge associated with such household chores as the collection of fuel and water; animal husbandry, livestock breeding, herding techniques and technologies, grassland management, crop management, and breeding, knowledge and management of soil, and agricultural technologies; flora and fauna, hunting knowledge, veterinary knowledge, way-finding methods, geographical perceptions, and climactic awareness; the annual cycle of work and ritual in rural communities; 'development', the influence and locally negotiated use of new technologies, urbanization, urban migration, and urban adaptation; language—both synchronic and diachronic studies; conflict, violence, and resolution; architectural variation, skills, knowledge, and tools; education, apprenticeships, and cultured learning styles; popular culture, high art (modern and traditional), and reflections on Tibetan modernity; morals, ethics, and aesthetics; and other aspects of life that make up the diverse experience of being Tibetan. Undertaking such studies in specific communities would avoid the prevalent tendency to generalize about pan-Tibetan commonalities.

It must be stressed that we do not recommend that Tibetologists study what Tibetans report they spend their time doing, nor that Tibetologists should study whatever Tibetan people tell them to. Rather, we suggest that

Tibetology should cover a broader, more representative, range of topics than is currently the case.

A shift away from text-based studies of Tibetan religious esoterica to explorations of the diverse ways religion is practiced and understood by Tibetans is necessary, particularly as practiced by the illiterate majority. Women, who are 'most' Tibetans if 'most' is defined as more than fifty percent of the population, are particularly worthy of study: what religious rituals do women perform? Why? Where? When? How?

Apart from their specificity, these recommendations are nothing new. What is new is Tibetologists being incapable of carrying out the reforms necessary to make Tibetology resemble Tibetan reality more and Western fantasy less. Consequently, we recommend greater focus on co-authorship and collaboration between Tibetan and international authors. The negotiation necessitated by this process will lessen the capacity of Tibetologists to enact Orientalist fantasies in print. Secondly, more forums and platforms for Tibetans to represent themselves, with or without the assistance of international collaborators, to audiences, must be made available. Finally, Tibetology, as a discipline, should not be a theoretically isolated and anachronistic field in an age when 'area studies' has been ubiquitously dismembered and abandoned (see Katzenstein 2001 and Chow 1993). Tibetology should be public, negotiated, and peer-critiqued.

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A RESPONSE TO *WAYS* AND THE SYNTAX OF
NOUN PHRASES IN QĪNGHǎI CHINESE DIALECTS

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ABSTRACT

In the course of offering a review of Zhāng Chéngcái's *Ways*, this paper describes the syntax of noun phrases in the Chinese dialect of Huángshuǐ, in Qīnghǎi Province. Unlike other Chinese dialects, this dialect employs several postpositions for indicating syntactic nominal relationships. The origin of this phenomenon in contact with non-Sinitic languages in the region and its significance are also explored.

KEY WORDS

Chinese dialects, Qīnghǎi, syntax, language contact,
Monguor, Amdo Tibetan

INTRODUCTION

For more than twenty years, Professor Zhāng Chéngcái 张成材 has made steady, enduring contributions to the description of Qīnghǎi Chinese dialects, including the *Xīníng Fāngyán zhì* 西宁方言志 (1987, in collaboration with Zhū Shìkuī 朱世奎) and the *Xīníng Fāngyán Cídiǎn* 西宁方言词典 (1994). In this paper, we will discuss Zhāng's (2006) most recent contribution—'Ways of Expression of Prepositions and their Related Meanings in Xīníng Dialect of Qīnghǎi', (hereafter *Ways*), with the aim of supplementing this important treatise where possible, while simultaneously furthering the discussion it raises where necessary. It is hoped through the course of this discussion to more sharply delineate the extent of what is known about the grammar of the dialect, and point toward what matters are further in need of investigation.

We begin by considering several general claims *Ways* makes about the dialect and its investigation. Then we will consider the description of the 'prepositions' (which is the standard translation for the term *jiècí* 介词, but which we will see is perhaps not most appropriate in this context) that *Ways* provides, and supplement or reorganize it, as necessary. Finally, we consider the larger value that *Ways* has in understanding the field of Qīnghǎi Chinese dialects, and by extension, its value to the larger field of China studies.

WAYS CLAIMS

Geographic Scope of the Study

Ways is to be applauded for the clarity with which it sets out to define the scope of its description, stating that it purports to be an account of 'prepositions' in the dialect of

the city of Xīníng. However, in the course of its definition, the paper is both too narrow and too broad. In addition to urban Xīníng the Chinese dialects of Qīnghǎi Province are reported to be spoken in the following counties: Dàtōng 大通, Huángyuán 湟源, Huángzhōng 湟中, Píng'ān 平安, Guìdé 贵德, Ményuán 门源, Lèdū 乐都, Mínhé 民和, Hùzhù 互助, Huàlóng 化隆, Xúnhuà 循化, and Tóng rén 同仁.¹ Moreover, the vocabulary and grammar of the Chinese dialects of this region are reported to maintain a high degree of uniformity, with the exception of Xúnhuà, which is part of the so-called Hézhōu 河州 dialect group. *Ways* claims, then, that while its description of prepositions is that of the Xīníng dialect, it can serve as a description of the entirety of Chinese dialects in Qīnghǎi Province.

In certain important ways, most notably the core lexicon and general phonological system, the city of Xīníng overlaps considerably with its neighboring areas. However, in other important ways, there are differences between the two. Zhāng Chéngcái (1984) most clearly delineates the sub-dialects of the region based on tonal, phonological, and lexical grounds. This sub-classification results in three categories: the aforementioned Hézhōu huà 河州话, which includes the counties of Huàlóng, Xúnhuà, and Tóng rén; the Lèdū-Mínhé section (primarily a three-tone dialect group); and the Xīníng group, including Píng'ān, Hùzhù, Dàtōng, Huángyuán, Huángzhōng, Guìdé, and urban Xīníng. This analysis was based on solid linguistic data, and largely accords with popular perceptions in Qīnghǎi. For these

¹ Hǎidōng 海东 Region consists of Hùzhù Monguor (Tǔ 土) Autonomous County, Huàlóng Huí 回 Autonomous County, Píng'ān County, Lèdū County, Mínhé Huí and Monguor (Tǔ) Autonomous County, and Xúnhuà Salar Autonomous County. Xīníng City consists of Huángzhōng County, Dàtōng Huí and Monguor (Tǔ) Autonomous County, Huángyuán County, and the more urban areas of Xīníng.

reasons, unless compelling evidence to the contrary is provided, we believe this tripartite division should be adhered to in making claims about the 'Chinese dialects of Qīnghǎi'.

When it comes to making claims about the syntax of the dialect, clarity is even more important, because within the sub-dialects described above, meaningful differences exist. For example, there is an important isogloss that runs through western Huángzhōng County, around the town of Duōbà 多巴 that divides Xīníng's urban variety from that of the more rural west. The isogloss divides those dialects within the larger Xīníng group that have a distinct topic marker [xɔ] (transcribed in *Ways* as 荷; transcribed here as 呵) and the nominal marker [xa] (transcribed as 哈, but with a reported variant [a] 啊) from those to the west that merge them (Dede 2007b).

Another problem is a feeling among old Xīníng residents that there are clear differences between the dialect of the city and that of the surrounding countryside expressed to this researcher when investigating the use of prepositions and postpositions in the region. Further, as remarked in a review of Zhāng (1994), certain examples from the text sound as if they are from an area outside of Xīníng where there are mixed populations of Hàn 汉 and Tibetan (Cháo Shēngxiáng 巢生祥 1998). For these reasons it seems *Ways* is both too broad and too narrow in its definition of the scope of its subject. Until we have a more detailed picture of the varieties of Chinese spoken in and around Xīníng, the best we can do is to be clear as to the provenance of our data. Over time this will allow us to accurately assess claims of whether the syntax of the Xīníng dialect is markedly different from its neighbors.

Demographic Scope of the Study

Second, we agree wholeheartedly with *Ways* in its claim that one must separate out 'written Chinese' (*shūmiànyǔ* 书面语) when doing research on the dialect, or certain special features of the dialect will not be revealed. However, the further claim that, in doing research on the dialect "...[one] must take fifty to sixty year old people as the basis (*bìxū yǐ wǔ liùshí yǐshàng de lǎorén wéi yījù* 必须以五六十以上的老人为依据)" is less justified. This claim reflects both a presupposition about dialectology in general and a demonstrable fact about the Xīníng dialect in particular. The Xīníng dialect is changing rapidly in all aspects of its grammar, including phonology, lexicon, and syntax, undoubtedly due to changes in the population of Xīníng since 1949 (Dede 1999a, 2006). There is little doubt that the Xīníng dialect of the twenty-first century is very different from the Xīníng dialect of the middle of the twentieth century.

The presupposition about dialectology is that the goal of the discipline is to ascertain, describe, codify, and preserve some 'pure' or 'original' variety of speech indicative of an area. In fact, dialects, whether referring to characteristics of regional or social varieties of speech, are constantly in flux, changing gradually from generation to generation, or changing rapidly in response to external 'shocks' that radically alter the linguistic environment. The goal of dialectology cannot be to uncover and record an original variety, because constant change over time renders the notion of dialectal originality a myth. Therefore, we must rely on standards other than simply the age of a speaker to determine whether the language produced is representative. *Ways* itself recognizes this. The very first example of dialect speech that it offers as evidence is from a seven or eight year old boy.

What then is the goal of dialectology? There are at least two larger questions we may use our fieldwork results to pursue. First, there are the questions of how and why language varieties change; i.e., the question of what internal linguistic mechanisms facilitate or hinder particular linguistic changes. Second, there is the issue of the relationship between a linguistic variety and the speech community that uses it. Dialectology helps us understand the changes that a speech community has undergone, and connects that with other aspects of the community's socio-cultural evolution. It is in this last regard that *Ways* and the study of Qīnghǎi Chinese dialects in general make an important contribution.

Systemicity

Ways makes an important point in stating that the study of Xíníng dialect grammar must be undertaken in a comprehensive manner. That is, one should not simply discuss a particular phenomenon in isolation. By way of example, *Ways* points out that the controversy surrounding 'pre-posed objects' in the dialect is intimately connected with the explanation of 'prepositions'. While we agree with this last example, we are unsure as to how to evaluate the general claim. Is it possible to describe a dialect's syntax *in toto*, without first analyzing it into subparts? Certainly, syntactic issues are related to each other, but without some analytical foothold it is impossible to initiate a description. We choose to understand *Ways* meaning in this regard to be that one must consider all the prepositions together in understanding the system of prepositions.

Unfortunately, *Ways* itself falls short of this ideal in two regards. First, one 'preposition' [xa] 哈, is not treated in a single section in the work (as will be further described below), and second, one 'preposition' (the 'ablative' [ta],

[sa], or [tɕia]), is not treated at all. In the following section, we hope to address these two shortcomings in describing the same basic system that is described in *Ways*.

NOMINAL GRAMMATICAL RELATIONSHIPS IN HUÁNGSHŨI CHINESE

In the following section, we describe along functional lines the syntactic phenomenon *Ways* describes, while correcting the two shortcomings noted above. We shall refrain from using the word 'preposition' in our description of the salient grammatical markers, because the term implies that the constituent is 'positioned before' the noun phrase. In the dialect in question, the constituent consistently follows the noun phrase, and so we will refer to them as 'postpositions'. The Chinese term, *jiècí* 介词 means something like 'mediating term' and thereby avoids the problem of position in relation to the noun phrase. In English and in the grammar of Standard Chinese, these 'mediating terms' are positioned before the noun phrase, so the translation as 'preposition' is entirely reasonable for Standard Chinese.

Henceforth, we shall refer to the object of study as Huángshǔi Chinese. It refers to that sub-group of Qīnghǎi Chinese dialects spoken in Píng'ān, Hùzhù, Dàtōng, Huángzhōng, Huángyuán, Guǐdé, and the city of Xīníng. This designation follows Zhāng (1984) in identifying the sub-dialect based on lexical and phonological correspondences. We believe that the system we describe below is comprehensible throughout this region, though there is significant variation in the production of the dialect due to historical and demographic factors. Specifically, among educated speakers in the city of Xīníng, certain of these features are less likely to be realized. Indeed, there is the possibility, as yet to be confirmed, that the old Xīníng

dialect is significantly different from its neighbors in the realization of this system, which is certainly the result of the urban center's peculiar socio-cultural history.

In short, there are three postpositions to be described individually below, that form the system of 'mediating terms' in the dialect. These terms occur in isolation, or frequently in tandem with prepositions. It is our contention that in all cases these postpositions are the result of contact with non-Sinitic languages spoken in the region since the fifteenth century. The significance of this claim will be addressed in the final section.

The Anti-Ergative [xa]

The first postposition discussed in *Ways* is [xa] 哈, but which *Ways* says alternates with [a] 啊; the former more common in the countryside, the latter more typical of urban Xíníng. The first part of *Ways'* description follows the standard understanding of the postposition; that it functions to mark pre-verbal objects, in much the same way that *bǎ* 把 marks the disposal in Standard Chinese (SC). The following examples from *Ways* demonstrate this function:

1. 他我哈吓给了一跳
3rd 1st [xa] scare give ASP one MW
He gave me quite a scare.
2. 我请假的理由哈一挂说了。
1st ask leave PRT reason [xa] all tell ASP
I completely explained my reason for asking for leave.

As *Ways* points out, either of these examples could be restated in the dialect replacing the postposition with the preposition [pa³] 把 and the meaning would not be affected.

Ways also points out that the usual restrictions that are found with *bǎ* in SC are not found in the use of [pa³] in Xīníng. For example:

3. 再 你 把 你 坐 着!

now 2nd [pa] 2nd sit ASP

You sit (as a host might say to a guest after a meal when the guest tries to help with cleaning up).

4. 你 把 我 没 气 死

2nd [pa] 1st haven't anger death

You didn't make me so angry that I could die.

These examples show that [pa³] 把 in Xīníng, and perhaps in other areas of northwest China, does not behave as it does in SC. SC *bǎ* should involve some kind of 'disposal' of the noun phrase following *bǎ*, but that is not the case in either of these sentences. Further, SC *bǎ* is not supposed to include a negative adverb in the main predicate (if there is a negative adverb, it is supposed to precede the *bǎ*), but this rule is clearly violated in Example 4.

The description of the function of [xa] in *Ways* is accurate and accords with the common understanding of the postposition. Unfortunately, *Ways* lists other functions of [xa] in an entirely different section of the paper. For example, under 'expressing give/ transfer' (*biǎo gěiyǔ* 表给与) we find the following examples:

5. 你 的 书 我 哈 看 给 一 挂

2nd Prt book 1st [xa] look give MW

Let me have a look at your book.

6. 你 我 哈 帮 着 找 给 一 间 房 子

2nd 1st [xa] help ASP look give one MW house

Help me look for a house.

In these examples [xa] marks the noun phrase towards which the object is transferred (Example 5), or on whose behalf the action of the verb is done (Example 6).

The following examples from *Ways* are listed under 'expressing passive' (*biǎo bèidòng* 表被动):

7. 我哈雨泡了个透

1st [xa] rain soak ASP MW through

I was soaked through by the rain

8. 肉哈狗抬走了

meat [xa] dog carry go ASP

The meat was carried away by the dog.

Whether these are 'passive constructions' is open to discussion, but it is clear they only differ from examples 1 and 2 above in the relative order of the patient and the agent. We contend that by foregrounding the patient in examples 7 and 8 the speaker draws discourse focus to this entity. This is similar to the passive construction in other languages.

These other functions of [xa] suggest it is significantly different from SC *bǎ*. *Ways* makes an effort to account for this wider function, saying:

... *Wǒ yǐwéi, hái bùrú kànzuo jiècí biǎodáyì de yǔzhùcí.*

...我以为，还不如看作介词表达义的语助词。

'...I think that it's better to consider it a mood particle (?) that expresses prepositional meanings.'

The question mark after 'mood particle' (*yǔzhùcí* 语助词) indicates our doubt about the meaning of this term. [xa] is certainly not a mood particle, and yet that is what the term *yǔzhùcí* usually means. We find this explanation dissatisfying.

Dede (2007b) addressed this wider function of [xa], suggesting that all of the functions are derived from a single marker, which originally may have developed under the influence of the Amdo Tibetan 'anti-ergative'. Dede (2007b) further describes the mechanism by which this feature came to be used in Huángshǔi Chinese. The story is quite complicated but, in short, it probably mixed with both an innate Chinese preverbal pause particle and the *bǎ* construction, creating a unique response to a complex linguistic environment.

Comitative/ Instrumental [lia]/ [la]

The second Huángshǔi Chinese postposition described in *Ways* is [lia] 俩/ [la] 啦 which, to the best of our knowledge, was first described in English in Dwyer (1992), although the existence of the variation between [lia] and [la] is not mentioned there. Variation between [lia] and [la] is not described elsewhere. The comitative/ instrumental function of this postposition is relatively straightforward and uncontroversial. Consider the following examples from *Ways*:

9. 我钢笔俩写惯了，毛笔俩写不来
1st fountain pen [lia] write accustomed ASP brush
[lia] write not come
I'm used to writing with a fountain pen; I can't write
with a brush.
10. 你谁俩来了?
2nd who [lia] come ASP
Who did you come with?

Example 9 demonstrates the instrumental use of [lia], while Example 10 demonstrates the comitative function. Dwyer

(1992) points out the similarities between the form and function of this postposition and the Monguor postposition [-la]. This conclusion is entirely reasonable, and we thus will not add to it.

Ways helpfully includes examples of this postposition's function as a marker for quasi-comparatives, such as:

11. 天气热着就象火啦烧着
weather hot ASP just like fire [la] burn ASP
The weather is burning hot.

This function is similar to the use of the SC pattern *gēn... yíyàng* 跟... 一样. As far as we know, it was not described prior to *Ways*.

Ablative [ta]/ [tɕia]/ [sa]

The most significant shortcoming found in *Ways* is the lack of description of the ablative postposition [ta]/ [tɕia]/ [sa] found in numerous varieties of Huángshǔi Chinese. Dede (1999b) first described this postposition in English, which occurs alone or in tandem with a preposition, as the following examples demonstrate:

12. [tɕia²] 夜来个儿 兰州 [tɕia] 来 俩
3rd yesterday Lánzhōu [tɕia] come ASP
He came up from Lánzhōu yesterday.
13. 他昨天从北京[tɕia]来了。
3rd yesterday from Běijīng [tɕia] came ASP
He came from Běijīng yesterday.

In addition to demonstrating the function of the ablative postposition [tɕia], these examples also demonstrate the

immense amount of lexical variation in the dialect, as evidenced by the two forms for the third person pronoun ([tɕia²] and [tʰa¹] 他) and the two forms for the word yesterday ([j⁴ lɛ²⁻³ kɔ̌ ɛ] 夜来个儿 and [tsu² tiã¹] 昨天).

Examples 12 and 13 were gathered in 1996 from ethnically Hàn speakers of Huángshǔi Chinese. Subsequent fieldwork in the region confirms the use of this postposition in the speech of ethnically Hàn, Huí, and Tibetan speakers of the dialect. The wide amount of variation in the realization of this feature (between [ta], [tɕia], and [sa]) suggests its value as a dialect variable operating below speakers' consciousness. For this reason, it proved to be a useful measure of the speed at which the dialect is adapting to influence from Standard Chinese (Dede 1999a). Most importantly, this feature is another clear example of the influence of non-Sinitic influence on the syntax of the dialect. The variant [sa] is identical to the ablative marker in Monguor, from which it most certainly derives (Ibid).

Other 'Prepositions'

In addition to these postpositions, the equivalents of SC prepositional expressions are found in Huángshǔi Chinese, often with the same SC preposition, or with a widely used dialectal variant of it. For example, the basic locative function is fulfilled by the SC locative preposition [tsɛ⁴] 在, or with a widely used variant [tɛ⁴] (transcribed as 呆, 代 or 帶) which is interchangeable with the SC variant. The following examples are from *Ways*:

14. 娃娃们 呆 院院里 耍着
children [tɛ⁴] courtyard play ASP
The children are playing in the yard.

15. 阿达 呆 山上 割 田着

father [tɛ⁴] mountain cut field ASP

Dad is in the mountains harvesting wheat.

Syntactically, this pattern is the same as SC, differing only in the form of the locative preposition. The variation between the dialectal [tɛ⁴] and the SC [tsɛ⁴] is also a valuable measure of the degree to which the Huángshǔi community has changed its speech in response to influence from SC.

In sum, the functional equivalents of SC prepositional phrases are realized in Huángshǔi Chinese through a combination of prepositional, postpositional, and prepositional-postpositional hybrid patterns. These latter two strategies are unique among Chinese dialects, and constitute the phenomenon most in need of explanation. It is our contention that the use of postpositions in this manner is the direct result of language contact in the Qīnghǎi region between Chinese dialects and non-Sinitic languages, primarily Monguor and Amdo Tibetan, both of which employ postpositions for the functions described above.

CONCLUSIONS

Two important lessons may be drawn from this review of *Ways* and the expression of prepositional functions in Huángshǔi Chinese. First, over the past twenty years, most research on these dialects has focused on the topics raised in *Ways* and supplemented in this essay. We believe that the sum total of this work constitutes a fairly complete description of the function of noun phrases in the dialect syntax. However, until now, there has been inadequate description and explanation of verb phrase syntax in Huángshǔi Chinese. A good start was achieved with Zhāng Ānshēng's 张安生 (2007) description of the use of a

reported speech particle in the speech of Huí people in the region, but which is also widespread among other language communities in Qīnghǎi. We believe the next important contribution to the study of Huángshǔi Chinese will come in the form of a complete description of the verb phrase, with particular attention to the tense-aspect system. This description will also have to address the question of the role language contact played in the development of that system. *Ways*, in its description of noun phrase syntax, makes clearer the necessity of that final piece.

The second lesson is that this language contact phenomenon is clear evidence of long-standing influence from non-Sinitic languages on the development of this particular Chinese dialect. The socio-cultural context that breeds such linguistic interference is one in which these various speech communities co-existed in close proximity for a long time. At some point in the development of the dialect, many speakers were probably bi- or trilingual. The cultural exchange manifest in this linguistic evidence speaks to a period of relatively peaceful coexistence among communities of people, now considered separate ethnic groups. We consider this a valuable historical lesson, particularly in light of the contemporary ethnic situation, and a lesson particularly well-suited for all researchers of China, past and present.

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*LAZI (LAB RTSE) CONSTRUCTION IN KARMATANG
(SKAR MA THANG) VILLAGE*

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ABSTRACT

The construction of a new *lazi (lab rtse)* in Karmatang (Skar ma thang) is described, with fourteen photographs illustrating the process.

KEY WORDS

Lab rtse, Skar ma thang, Tibetan, Qinghai, Amdo, *lazi*

Tsemdo (Tshe mdo) took these photos in his home village of Karmatang¹ (Skar ma thang), Xinjie² 新街 Township, Trika (Khri ka, Guide 贵德) County, Mtsolo (Mtsho lho, Hainan 海南) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsongon (Mtsho sgnon, Qinghai 青海) Province on 15 July 2007. The photos show the process of constructing a new *lazi* (*lab rtse*).

Lazi are religious structures found throughout Tibetan and adjacent areas that embody local mountain deities, in this case Amny Wawo (A myes Bal bo—the mountain at right in Figure One). Images of Amny Machen (A myes Rma chen—Figure Two) and Amny Dakar (A myes Brag dkar—Figure Three) were also placed in the *lazi*. Amny Machen is often represented as the leader of local deities (*zhidak*, *gzhi bdag*) in Amdo and thus his image was also needed for the Karmatang *lazi*.

Amny Wawo brings good fortune and bountiful harvests, and protects the village. The *lazi* is his stockpile of weapons for fending off evils. Many representations of rifles, spears, arrows (Figure Four), and knives are built into a new *lazi*, which is also considered to be the seat of the deity. Finally, *lazi* are also thought to be memorials to the bravery of past heroes.

The first step in building a *lazi* is for a lama to choose a correct location, which is usually a high place such as a mountain summit or ridge, although a *lazi* may be located at a mountain base. Ati Tenpa Gyatso (A this bstan pa rgya mthso), the incarnate lama of nearby Ati (A this) Monastery, chose the location for this *lazi* based on geomantic analysis of local land formations.

Once a suitable location was chosen, Karmatang

¹ Tibetan is written phonetically, followed by Wiley transliteration at first usage. For Chinese terms, *pinyin* 拼音 is given with Chinese characters accompanying first usage.

² The township lacks a commonly used Tibetan name.

villagers gathered the materials necessary for construction, including representations of rifles, knives, and swords; coral, turquoise, gold, silver, coins; and so on. The arrows included real hunting arrows as well as large, straight poles that had been fashioned into massive arrow forms. Most arrows depicted here were sourced from Xining 西宁 lumber yards and then transported to Karmatang. The central pole or *shokshang* (*srog shing*—literally, 'life-wood'—see Figure Five) was taken from Chamo Yangdzong (Khra mo gyang rdzong) Valley near Mt. Amny Dakar. The conifer trees and bushes used during construction (figures Six and Seven) were sourced from three valleys, which are locally known as Dzong sum (Rdzong gsum—'Three Valleys'). These valleys are named Chamo Yangdzong (Khra mo yang rdzong—'Dappled Valley'), Dakmodzong (Stag mo rdzong—'Tigress Valley'), and Ngonmodzong (Sngon mo rdzong—'Blue Valley').

When these materials were prepared, Ati Monastery monks purified the materials (Figure Eight) by chanting scriptures for three days. Meanwhile, villagers built the *lazi* foundation by leveling the ground and building a rectangular concrete base four meters square. A hole about one and a half meters square was put in the center where objects were buried (figures Nine to Eleven). When the foundation was complete, villagers began the *lazi* ritual depicted in these images, guided by the monks (figures Twelve to Fourteen).

This *lazi* is located on a southeast-facing ridge of Mount Amny Dakar. Prior to the building of this *lazi*, a village shrine served the purpose of the *lazi*. On the anniversary of the construction of this *lazi*, villagers add new hunting arrows, tree branches, and wool string. The locals added additional new arrows and tree braches to the *lazi* on the thirteenth day of the sixth lunar month in 2008, the first anniversary of the *lazi's* construction. When villagers need a blessing or a favor from the local deity,

they visit the *lazi* where they leave offerings of incense and wheat flour in order to bring good luck for such things as long trips and business transactions, to prevent natural disasters, and so on. Before the *lazi* was constructed, people went to the Karmatang Village shrine or to high places around the village (such as Amny Wawo, or other hillsides) marked with prayer flags and wind horses and performed similar activities. People make offerings on the first and/ or the fifteenth days of each lunar month.

The Karmatang *lazi* was built based on the recommendation of a villager who was consulted by an overseas Tibetan benefactor, a Karmatang native now residing in New York City. He contributed 10,000 RMB to construct the *lazi* in the hope of helping villagers.

Figure One: Karmatang Village before the *lazi* ritual. The *lazi*, after completion, was located on the ridge to the far right. Amny Wawo is the high, dome-shaped mountain on the right.

Figure Two: Amny Machen as depicted in a *tangka* (*thangka*) in a village home.

Figure Three: Amny Dakar depicted in a mural in the shrine of neighboring Ru jyi (Rol skye) Village.

Figure Four: Arrows are made and painted before *lazi* construction. Village leaders bought the materials in Xining and village men made the arrows. Each household provided fifty RMB to purchase materials.

Figure Five: The lama and the villagers set up the *shokshang*.

Figure Six: Villagers load a conifer tree onto a tractor trailer. The conifer was tied to the *shokshang*. Villagers

were chosen for this task on the basis of having such auspicious religious names as Tsering Tashi (Tshe ring Bkra shis, literally, 'longevity auspiciousness') and if they were considered morally upright and virtuous. They traveled twenty kilometers by tractor to collect the necessary materials.

Figure Seven: The conifer tree is tied to the *shokshang*. Wool strings are tied among the conifer's leaves.

Figure Eight: The day before the *lazi* ritual, such materials as dough effigies called *torma* (*gtor ma*), *wonba* (*bum pa*—a vase filled with wheat, beans, honey, and butter), and scripture-inscribed wood blocks were prepared.

Figure Nine: The lama and his student measure where the *shokshang* should be placed.

Figure Ten: The monks chant after the *wonba* is placed in the *lazi* base.

Figure Eleven: The monks cover the *wonba* with soil. Next, the *shokshang* is set upright above where the *wonba* is buried. The monk holds silk (*rgya sras za 'og*) that will be placed over the *wonba*.

Figure Twelve: The longest arrow is inserted into the *lazi* first and the shortest one last.

Figure Thirteen: Village children tie white wool string, symbolizing auspiciousness, around the *lazi shokshang* to stabilize it and the arrows.

Figure Fourteen: Rain fell after the *lazi* was constructed. People shouted, "*Lha rgyal lo!* Victory to the gods!", scattered wind horses (*rlung rta*), and left.























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REVIEW

WUTUN. Janhunen J, M Peltomaa, E Sandman, and Xiawudongzhuo. 2008. München: Lincom Europa.

Reviewed by Keith Slater (SIL International East Asia Group)

I once heard a presentation in which the speaker gave a typology of 'mixed languages', the final type of which was 'languages that should not be', and the only example of this type given was Wutun. This evaluation was based on confusing details about Wutun that had, to that time, appeared in scholarly publications. Based on the descriptions found in such publications as Chen (1982, 1988, 1989), Li (1984, 1986), Wurm (1995), and especially the analysis presented by Lee-Smith and Wurm (1996), Wutun appeared to be a fairly random mixture of Tibetan, Chinese, and Mongolian elements. Randomness in linguistic structure, of course, *should not be*, and a random mixture of elements from three source languages would be unusual indeed.

With this background, the linguist with an interest in the outcomes of language contact will be delighted with *Wutun*. Janhunen et al. have done a great service to the field by giving us both a reliable outline of the structures of Wutun, and (more importantly from a contact perspective) by identifying historical sources of the various Wutun lexemes and structures that they describe. Under this well-informed treatment, Wutun no longer appears to be a random mixture, nor even a particularly odd language. Wutun is, the authors clearly show, a language of Sinitic extraction, which has undergone significant restructuring as a result of intensive contact with Tibetan; there is also

limited borrowing from Mongolic, but this influence is very small.

The introductory sections (11-25) give an overview of the history and cultural context of Wutun. This discussion is critical to understanding the historical factors that played into the current status of the language, as well as to understanding why Wutun, though it has only about 4,000 speakers, is currently strongly maintained. The authors also discuss previous scholarly work on Wutun, and give an overview of the linguistic area to which the language belongs, which they refer to as the 'Amdo Sprachbund'.

Phonologically, the authors tell us on page twenty-five, the fundamental question for Wutun is "how Sinitic Wutun phonology remains, and how Bodic it has become." The answer is not a simple one, and alongside their synchronic phonological analysis, the authors devote much space to discussion of historical concerns, showing which elements of the system can be traced back to Sinitic roots, and which have been innovated based on Tibetan patterns. The phonology discussion (25-52) includes consonants, vowels, syllable structure, suprasegmentals (Wutun has no tone system), and comments on segmental sandhi occurring at syllable boundaries.

Morphologically, Wutun is odd for a Sinitic language, because it has adapted itself to the agglutinative pattern of Amdo Tibetan (mostly by creating suffixes or enclitics from reanalyzed Sinitic morphemes). This means that there is much morphology to discuss, and the authors devote most of their book to this topic (52-101). This discussion includes such nominal morphological phenomena as case and number marking, pronoun forms, and such verbal morphological categories as tense, aspect, voice, perspective, modality, interrogation, and negation.

Wutun has a Sinitic-style nominative-accusative case system, and its case markers are primarily Sinitic in origin,

though in a couple of the oblique cases (distributive and comparative) there is the possibility of Tibetan influence. The numerals one through ten are Sinitic, but there are some Tibetan borrowings among larger numbers; the language has only one classifier *ge* (which also functions as a singular marker).

The verbal system is described as one involving serialization, plus auxiliaries. There is a series of verbal suffixes, referred to by the authors as 'complements', that indicate aspect, voice, or modal meanings. In certain instances these suffixes create nonfinite verbs in a complex construction, and in other instances they appear on finite main verbs. Most verbal inflectional and derivational markers are clearly Sinitic in origin, but (as with the case system) a few forms may be of Tibetan provenance. There is also a set of three 'serial markers' that appear on nonfinite verbs within a complex construction, and "are functionally equivalent to what are also termed verbal adverbs (converbs or gerunds)" (89), especially in the Altaic descriptive tradition.

The authors list eleven auxiliary verbs (93), of which ten are identified as Sinitic in origin and one (the factual *re*, which indicates certainty) is borrowed from Tibetan.

Like other languages of this Sprachbund, Wutun marks its finite verbs for perspective (see also Slater 2003). The authors note (97) that this binary distinction basically "divides statements into two contrasting types: those belonging, and those not belonging, to the personal (egophoric) sphere of the speaker."

A nice feature of the morphology sections is that nearly all of the discussed morphological features are illustrated with sentence-length examples; thus, the reader can see not only the morphological forms, but their syntactic functions as well.

As one whose primary interest is in syntax, I was disappointed when I first picked up this book and

discovered that the section devoted to 'syntax' comprises only six pages (101-106); however, as we have seen, a significant amount of syntactic analysis is actually contained in the sections devoted to morphology. In the additional three syntax sections, we learn that Wutun may be characterized as a 'topic-prominent' language (101-103). Nonetheless, there is a basic SOV word order, though some variation is permitted, especially in the ordering of adjectives with respect to the head noun. The authors also illustrate certain of the morphosyntactic behaviors of 'invariable' word classes (i.e., words that are neither nouns nor verbs).

The book ends with a bibliography and three examples of supplemental information: an invaluable sample text, glossed and provided with free translations; a basic wordlist (the introduction to which tells us that hardly any Mongolic words are to be found in Wutun basic vocabulary); and a brief index of grammatical forms discussed in the work.

Again, *Wutun* is a welcome contribution. The team who produced it is highly qualified to settle the historic confusion regarding the origins of Wutun structures, and in this book they have provided ample discussion to do just that. No longer will Wutun be cited as an implausibly bizarre mixture. This is a laudable contribution to the field of language contact studies.

More generally, the book will be extremely helpful to those engaged in descriptions of languages and language contact processes in Qinghai. Finally, the book will be of great value to Sinitic studies in general, as we continue to develop an understanding of the ways in which Chinese languages can change under the influence of various neighboring languages.

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STORY: GOD–DOOR

Tshe dpag rnam rgyal (Duke University)

Traditional Moon Village lies near the sparkling Galaxy River, isolated from noisy bustling cities. Even the two ancient conifer trees standing by the river seem to have kept their youth, isolated from the damaging influences of the outside world. People respect the trees as a god, a sacred door for the village.

I was sent to the school beyond the river when I was eight, and had to pass the god–door every day on the narrow path that meandered between the old trees. My daily route provided countless opportunities to have contact with those mysterious trees that both amazed and frightened me with their outstanding height and remarkable denseness.

The trees stood atop the valley through which Galaxy River flows. The riverbed is deeply concave and the path on the slope of the valley is as steep as a mountain cliff. Despite its steepness, everyone leaving the village had to traverse this path – the only passage out of the village.

"Zhaba, don't ever harm the trees by the river – they are our village's God–door," eighty–year–old Grandfather said the first morning I went to school. "The birds and insects in those trees are guests both there and in our village. Be careful while playing with your slingshot."

"But you always say black crows are the most inauspicious birds, and that they bring bad luck to people," I said. "There are many in the trees every morning. They make terrible ghost–like sounds." I didn't know what sounds

ghosts made, and I hadn't seen one before; but I had heard Grandfather tell many stories about them.

"Don't argue with elders, Zhaba. If elders say something is wrong, it's wrong," he said with finality.

"Grandfather, they have no nests there. They fly there from the forest behind our village," I said, thinking that it would be OK to shoot birds not originally from God-door.

"Remember your age, baby. I'm eighty," he said, and turned to the family shrine to make his morning prostrations, his eyes brimming with concern and worry.

"OK, Grandfather," I replied, surrendering.

Shouldering my patched book-bag, I started off to school – the sole brick building anywhere near us. When I reached the river cliff, I looked at the trees again in a respectful way, recalling what Grandfather had said. The barley-birds sang welcoming songs to passersby, but the black crows made horrible croaks that angered me.

I took my catapult from my bag and looked for a proper sized pebble. Finding one, I loaded it and aimed at a crow, squawking atop the left tree. I pulled back the string with all my strength and let fly. The crow flew away the instant I released the string. I shot twice more at the other crows but they flew away in the same manner as the first, as though they sensed approaching danger. "They are smarter than people!" I thought, rushing down the river cliff as the school bell started ringing. As I was running, I tumbled, rolled down, and almost plunged into the river. Luckily I wasn't badly injured – I only scraped my knees. I got up and passed the log bridge over Galaxy River.

"Curse those inauspicious crows!" I muttered, and then to that I added all the terrible words I could think of, and hurried in to school, dust permeating my clothes.

That evening I told Grandfather what had happened. He frowned, then smiled broadly, and finally said, "Have you ever heard the saying, 'Listen to elders' words'? What happened to you resulted from you ignoring your elders. Let's see if you defy elders after this profound teaching."

"It's all because of those bad black crows," I said, comforting myself.

God-door provided much convenience to villagers and birds throughout the year. In the winter and early spring, noisy crows and magpies perched in the trees in the early mornings, energetically urging villagers to rise from their slumber and start a new day. In summer, people were sheltered both from heavy rain and scorching sunshine. Barley-birds and many other birds perched in and sang from the trees, making passersby happier, and filling them with energy.

I liked to join the elders in the late afternoons when they gathered around the Chanting Hall. They talked of everything that was happening and had happened, and how they understood the things around them. Sometimes, they even made insulting jokes with one another, but it always ended happily.

One day they talked about the village's God-door. An old lady called Big Mouth started, "When I was young, people worshipped God-door almost everyday by offering *sang*¹ and the God-door grew very densely. But now, see, people hardly care about the door, and thieves pour into the village." Her mouth quivered unusually when she spoke.

¹ *Sang* = *bsang*, 'smoke offerings' that primarily consist of conifer needles.

Then she began counting on her knuckles the number of thefts that had happened in the village recently.

"Do you still offer *sang* to God-door?" asked Mr. Picky. People laughed at the question, because the ritual had been abandoned during the Cultural Revolution, and was never renewed. Big Mouth looked at the ground sheepishly.

"I would, if it hadn't been for that time we all almost starved," she said, wiping spittle from around her quivering lips.

Seventy-year-old Small Head peeked out from the Chanting Hall, dropped the prayer wheel's pull rope, and joined the discussion, "I think God-door looks as dense as in the old days, but young people's impudent behavior sometimes angers God-door, so it is losing its original color." Some nodded in agreement while others shook their heads in disagreement. Still others stayed silent without expression.

"Some school kids were hunting the guests of the God-door, too," said Mr. Big Eye, staring in the direction where the school was located, even though it wasn't in view. "I don't know what is good about having such a school that opposes our religion. The kids only know hunting barley-birds and magpies. Maybe those teachers are teaching them how to kill animals." Mr. Big Eye punctuated his opining by squashing a fly that was disturbing him. Some people nodded while others remained silent.

"But at least they know how to read the scriptures," said Mr. Modern. "And because the kids are so young they can't do anything if they aren't in school. I would send all my grandchildren to school if I had enough money to support them. Nowadays, if people don't know how to read, they're blind." He stopped for a moment and looked around at his audience's reaction, who were listening while

counting their prayers beads. "My son and I've been having arguments over this for months, and still haven't reached a conclusion. Today's young people are so stubborn and disobedient."

Many people laughed at this. Others said quietly, "That's what makes him Modern."

"Believe it or not, God-door is sacred and holy not only because it blocks thieves and strangers from outside, but because of its special shape. People won't find that anywhere else except in our village – Moon Village," one newly arrived, very old person started. He placed both of his canes on each side of him after being helped to sit by two other elders. His very old face was covered with deep, heavy wrinkles. His hands shook like prayer flags on windy autumn days. His hair was as white as the spongy ice that lies along the river in early spring. The few teeth still in his mouth were yellowish black. He was highly respected by the villagers.

"Oh, Uncle Dopu, you came! How are you these days?" many asked while lifting themselves up off the ground to show respect.

"Sit, don't stand," Uncle Dopu said and people sat back, waiting to hear what Uncle Dopu had to say. He then passionately began, "You know what? Our village's God-door was the strongest God-door ever. It would take too long to describe the things God-door has helped us with. The conifer tree itself is a sacred component of *sang*; its smoke purifies all that is contaminated. Our conifer God-door blocks misfortune and expels bad luck. Both trees have specific shapes that match two of the Eight Auspicious Symbols. The left tree looks like a conch, which removes ignorance and helps villagers become more intelligent. The right tree is shaped like an umbrella, which helps release

our village from suffering and removes obstacles from our lives. People shouldn't curse them, harm them, or hunt near them, because such bad behavior brings bad luck to our village."

I stood beside Grandfather until the elders finished talking at dusk. I thought of the events that happened after my crow hunting and felt guilty. Every afternoon I joined the elders' discussion as soon as school was over, and learned much about our village and its God-door, but I never saw Uncle Dopu again.

Several years passed. I was coming home at noon for lunch from school, and saw some strangers by the river near the log bridge. They had left a dusty car at the school; my first time to see a car. Many villagers were astonished to see it. Some said it was a ghost. It looked like a giant frog to me, even though I had seen many pictures of cars like in the books I read in school.

Three or four people wearing Chinese clothes were at the river. One was carrying a triple-legged telescopic thing around the bridge. They were measuring something. The one wearing the nicest clothes seemed to be the leader. He pointed to the God-door and made a chopping gesture. The others nodded. When village kids crossed the narrow log bridge, the men looked curiously, as if hoping to see one of us fall into the river, which of course did not happen since we had been crossing it almost every day for years. We waited to see what they would do after we crossed the bridge. The leader pointed to the bridge and said something, which none of us understood but we heard the other people laugh sarcastically.

"They are scorning us," said an older student. We collected some stones and hurled them at the strangers when we got on top of the river cliff, and raced heroically home after all the small stones were gone. We had ambushed the forest police who had always stopped our parents from collecting firewood some years before and they had run away leaving behind most of their belongings. *They* had never returned.

The strangers at the river became big news in the village. The kids talked about it in school; youngsters chatted about it in the lanes, elders discussed it in and around the Chanting Hall during their usual gatherings. It was even the main topic in village homes after meals and before going to bed.

"I heard several Chinese came to our village from far away in a small ghost-like thing to mine gold in our village's back-mountain, but they were kept away by our God-door," said Big Mouth the next day in the Chanting Hall while turning the huge wheel prayer, smiling proudly.

"Who knows? Maybe they have other intentions," said Mr. Picky. "Remember what happened last year? Some Chinese came and said they were tax collectors, and drove a bunch of our yaks and flocks of sheep away. Maybe they are the same. Yak butchers! Disgusting!" He spat on the ground and continued, "Anyway we are most fortunate to have such a respectable God-door, which is a savior to both people and animals."

"Uncle Darje," the son of his younger brother said, who had overheard him as he was on the way to the forest to cut firewood, "You don't need to be afraid. They are not tax collectors or miners. They are interested in our God-door and in our bridge."

Mr. Picky felt a bit better and started to rotate the prayer wheel again, but signs of worry still came over his face intermittently. After a while, he turned to the road his nephew had gone down and shouted, "Gonlo, be careful! Maybe they have come to enforce forest laws. They might imprison you for no reason!" then he began chanting under his breath.

The shadow climbed up the shady side of the valley from the river on the valley floor. Mr. Big Eye temporarily gazed at God-door with a worried frown and saw his eight-year-old grandson coming back from school with several other kids. He gave a sigh of relief and dropped the prayer wheel's pull rope, "My boy is coming," he said and quickly left for home to take care of his grandson, Donzhub.

"Grandpa, our teacher said the nation would build a new bridge for our village," Donzhub said.

With a mixture of happiness and sadness Mr. Big Eye asked, "Where?"

"Over the old log bridge. The teachers say it will be a wide concrete bridge," he replied. Mr. Big Eye felt terrible fear and began gazing at the enormous mountain behind the village.

Next year in spring, several 'soil destroyers' came to the river. They had paw-like heads and clawed the earth from both sides of the river. This angered the villagers who were very worried about God-door. Villagers argued with the workers and leaders. There were many 'stone ambushes' each night. The machines gnawed away at the river cliff until there was only one pace between God-door and the cliff. Some parts of God-door's roots protruded from the cliff; some parts were even damaged by the 'soil destroyers'.

But for some lucky reason, God-door remained upright atop the cliff.

The barley-birds, magpies, crows, and other guests of God-door were nowhere to be seen while construction was in progress and most never returned.

I missed them in the early mornings when I passed withering God-door. Mother escorted me to school during those days of construction. The road still extended between God-door after the new big bridge was built, but the soundless mornings made me feel hollow.

The villagers had no interest in celebrating the newly built bridge as they normally celebrated a newly built house. But some watched the workers and township government officials celebrate. Firecrackers were set off, which attracted the children, though most stayed some distance away. Elders did not attend.

The newly built bridge was very convenient for us kids. We no longer slipped from the muddy path on the cliff and rolled into the river in summer; we didn't slip down the icy path in winters and injure our knees after crashing into the frozen river. The elders' worries, however, continued, and grew stronger.

"Those idiots injured our sacred God-door, and now it is becoming more withered each and every day," said Mr. Picky, sitting in his usual place in the Chanting Hall.

"Absolutely! The children refuse to wear their boots and youngsters are lazy about tying their sashes after God-door started withering. God-door no longer protects us from changing into demons. I heard the son of Worker Zhaxi is speaking Tibetan and Chinese mixed together. Who can understand such people!" said Mr. Dorji, shaking his head and spitting fiercely on the ground.

"It's not only workers' kids, even my own little granddaughter is speaking like that!" said Big Mouth. She was now so old that her eyelids had become as loose as her lips.

"Do you still remember the days when we were young men and women?" Mr. Modern asked, feeling strangely anxious about the God-door. "We walked in the rain in woven robes; our feet never left boots and our backs never left robes. But look at the clothes that today's mindless youngsters wear – disgusting!" He spat a wad of spit into the dirt, which kicked up a tiny puff of dust. He continued, "Neither god-like nor ghost-like people, wearing Tibetan upper clothes and Chinese lower clothes."

The elders never stopped complaining and, with the passing of time, they left this world one by one. Their worries went with them, since the new generations were oblivious to such concerns. While contemplating these worries that were brought up by the people in the past, I remembered a sage's saying:

*When the jewel is in your hand,
You don't understand it;
When others own the jewel,
You are bothered by endless regret.*